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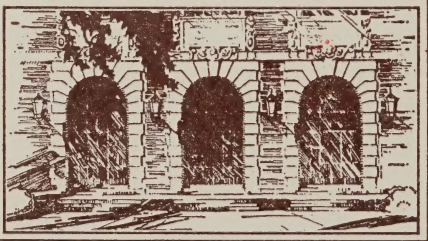

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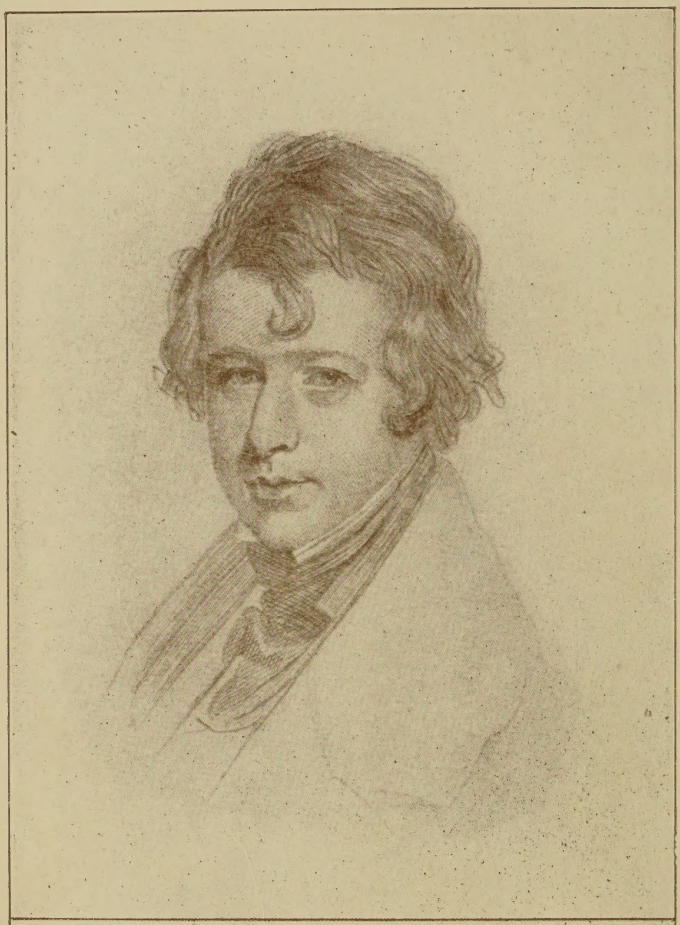

NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS

Edition De Luxe

The Works of

Edgar Allan Poe

VOLUMES 5 and 6

ILLUSTRATED

Miscellaneous

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea—but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its dénouement before any thing be attempted with the men. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment,

whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say, who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious

selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions —the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven" as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing *a* poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If

any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression —for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*, no poet can afford to dispense with *any thing* that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem, is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived. through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, or unity, of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe," (demanding no unity,) this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect:—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of du-

ration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul—not* of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating "the beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is *most*

readily attained in the poem. Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The univer-

sality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvements, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of *the application* of the *refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain*, the division of the poem into stanzas was, of course, a corollary: the *refrain* forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt: and these considerations, inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying

this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by *a human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven —the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word, "Nevermore," at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death—was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here also, is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to

Beauty: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore."—I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying, at every turn, the *application* of the word repeated; but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending —that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application.* I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one—the second less so—the third still less, and so on—until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself —by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it —is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" the most

delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me—or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction—I first established in mind the climax, or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer —that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the uttermost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end, where all works of art should begin—for it was here, at this point of my preconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover—and, secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza—as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able, in the subsiquent composition, to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should, without scruple, have purposely

enfeebled them, so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected, in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing.* The fact is, that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically—the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short: the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet—the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds) —the third of eight · the fourth of seven and a half—the fifth the same —the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines, taken individually, has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their combination *into stanza;* nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual, and some altogether novel effects,

arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident:—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the

plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped or stayed he.
But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:—

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore*,
"Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven* thou," I said, "art sure no craven.
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore?"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

—

Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

—

The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness:—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

> But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanor,

demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination,and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal.* It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which

has preceded them. The under current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

"Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from
off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is
dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on
the floor;
And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the
floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore.

THE COLLOQUY OF MONOS AND UNA

Μελλουτα ταυτα

Sophocles—Antig:

These things are in the future

Una. "Born again?"

Monos. Yes, fairest and best beloved Una, "born again." These were the words upon whose mystical meaning I had so long pondered, rejecting the explanations of the priesthood, until Death himself resolved for me the secret.

Una. Death!

Monos. How strangely, sweet Una, you echo my words! I observe, too, a vacillation in your step—a joyous inquietude in your eyes. You are confused and oppressed by the majestic novelty of the Life Eternal. Yes, it was of Death I spoke. And here how singularly sounds that word which of old was wont to bring terror to all hearts—throwing a mildew upon all pleasures!

Una. Ah, Death, the spectre which sate at all feasts! How often, Monos, did we lose ourselves in speculations upon its nature! How mysteriously did it act as a check to human bliss—saying unto it "thus far, and no farther!" That earnest mutual love, my own Monos, which burned within our bosoms—how vainly did we flatter ourselves, feeling happy in its first upspringing, that our happiness would strengthen with its strength! Alas! as it grew, so grew in our hearts the dread of that evil hour which was hurrying to separate us forever! Thus, in time, it became painful to love. Hate would have been mercy then.

Monos. Speak not here of these griefs, dear Una—mine, mine forever now!

Una. But the memory of past sorrow—is it not present joy? I have much to say yet of the things which have been. Above all, I burn to know the incidents of your own passage through the dark Valley and Shadow.

Monos. And when did the radiant Una ask anything of her Monos in vain? I will be minute in relating all—but at what point shall the weird narrative begin?

Una. At what point?

Monos. You have said.

Una. Monos, I comprehend you. In Death we have both learned the propensity of man to define the indefinable. I will not say, then, commence with the moment of life's cessation—but commence with that sad, sad instant when, the fever having abandoned you, you sank into a breathless and motionless torpor, and I pressed down your pallid eyelids with the passionate fingers of love.

Monos. One word first, my Una, in regard to man's general condition at this epoch. You will remember that one or two of the wise among our forefathers—wise in fact, although not in the world's esteem—had ventured to doubt the propriety of the term "improvement," as applied to the progress of our civilization. There were periods in each of the five or six centuries immediately preceding our dissolution, when arose some vigorous intellect, boldly contending for those principles whose truth appears now, to our disenfranchised reason, so utterly obvious—principles which should have taught our race to submit to the guidance of the natural laws, rather than attempt their control. At long intervals some master-minds appeared,

looking upon each advance in practical science as a retro-gradation in the true utility. Occasionally the poetic intellect—that intellect which we now feel to have been the most exalted of all—since those truths which to us were of the most enduring importance could only be reached by that *analogy* which speaks in proof-tones to the imagination alone, and to the unaided reason bears no weight—occasionally did this poetic intellect proceed a step farther in the evolving of the vague idea of the philosophic, and find in the mystic parable that tells of the tree of knowledge, and of its forbidden fruit, death-producing a distinct intimation that knowledge was not meet for man in the infant condition of his soul. And these men—the poets—living and perishing amid the scorn of the "utilitarians"—of rough pedants, who arrogated to themselves a title which could have been properly applied only to the scorned—these men, the poets, pondered piningly, yet not unwisely, upon the ancient days when our wants were not more simple than our enjoyments were keen—days when *mirth* was a word unknown, so solemnly deep-toned was happiness—holy, august and blissful days, when blue rivers ran undamned, between hills unhewn, into far forest solitudes, primæval, odorous, and unexplored.

Yet these noble exceptions from the general misrule served but to strengthen it by opposition. Alas! we had fallen upon the most evil of all our evil days. The great "movement"—that was the cant term—went on: a diseased commotion, moral and physical. Art—the Arts—arose supreme, and, once enthroned, cast chains upon the intellect which had elevated them to power. Man, because he could not but acknowledge the majesty of Nature, fell into childish exultation at his acquired and still-

increasing dominion over her elements. Even while he stalked a God in his own fancy, an infantine imbecility came over him. As might be supposed from the origin of his disorder, he grew infected with system, and with abstraction. He enwrapped himself in generalities. Among other odd ideas, that of universal equality gained ground; and in the face of analogy and of God—in despite of the loud warning voice of the laws of *gradation* so visibly pervading all things in Earth and Heaven—wild attempts at an omni-prevalent Democracy were made. Yet this evil sprang necessarily from the leading evil, Knowledge. Man could not both know and succumb. Meantime huge smoking cities arose, innumerable. Green leaves shrank before the hot breath of furnaces. The fair face of Nature was deformed as with the ravages of some loathsome disease. And methinks, sweet Una, even our slumbering sense of the forced and of the far-fetched might have arrested us here. But now it appears that we had worked out our own destruction in the perversion of our *taste*, or rather in the blind neglect of its culture in the schools. For, in truth, it was at this crisis that taste alone—that faculty which, holding a middle position between the pure intellect and the moral sense, could never safely have been disregarded—it was now that taste alone could have led us gently back to Beauty, to Nature, and to Life. But alas for the pure contemplative spirit and majestic intuition of Plato! Alas for the μουσικη which he justly regarded as an all-sufficient education for the soul! Alas for him and for it!—since both were most desperately needed when both were most entirely forgotten or despised.*

*"It will be hard to discover a better [method of education] than that which the experience of so many ages has already

Pascal, a philosopher whom we both love, has said, how truly!—"*que tout notre raisonnement se rèduit à céder au sentiment*"; and it is not impossible that the sentiment of the natural, had time permitted it, would have regained its old ascendency over the harsh mathematical reason of the schools. But this thing was not to be. Prematurely induced by intemperance of knowledge, the old age of the world drew on. This the mass of mankind saw not, or, living lustily although unhappily, affected not to see. But, for myself, the Earth's records had taught me to look for widest ruin as the price of highest civilization. I had imbibed a prescience of our Fate from comparison of China the simple and enduring, with Assyria the architect, with Egypt the astrologer, with Nubia, more crafty than either, the turbulent mother of all Arts. In history* of these regions I met with a ray from the Future. The individual artificialities of the three latter were local diseases of the Earth, and in their individual overthrows we had seen local remedies applied; but for the infected world at large I could anticipate no regeneration save in death. That man, as a race, should not become extinct, I saw that he must be "*born again.*"

discovered; and this may be summed up as consisting in gymnastics for the body, and *music* for the soul."—Repub. lib. 2. "For this reason is a musical education most essential; since it causes Rhythm and Harmony to penetrate most intimately into the soul, taking the strongest hold upon it, filling it with *beauty* and making the man *beautiful-minded*. . . . . He will praise and admire *the beautiful;* will receive it with joy into his soul, will feed upon it, and *assimilate his own condition with it.*" —Ibid. lib. 3. Music (μουσικη) had, however, among the Athenians, a far more comprehensive signification than with us. It included not only the harmonies of time and of tune, but the poetic diction, sentiment and creation, each in its widest sense. The study of *music* was with them, in fact, the general cultivation of the taste—of that which recognizes the beautiful—in contra-distinction from reason, which deals only with the true.

* "History," from ιστορειν, to contemplate.

And now it was, fairest and dearest, that we wrapped our spirits, daily, in dreams. Now it was that, in twilight, we discoursed of the days to come, when the Art-scarred surface of the Earth, having undergone that purification* which alone could efface its rectangular obscenities, should clothe itself anew in the verdure and the mountain-slopes and the smiling waters of Paradise, and be rendered at length a fit dwelling-place for man:—for man the Death-purged—for man to whose now exalted intellect there should be poison in knowledge no more—for the redeemed, regenerated, blissful, and now immortal, but still for the *material*, man.

Una.—Well do I remember these conversations, dear Monos; but the epoch of the fiery overthrow was not so near at hand as we believed, and as the corruption you indicate did surely warrant us in believing. Men lived; and died individually. You yourself sickened, and passed into the grave; and thither your constant Una speedily followed you. And though the century which has since elapsed, and whose conclusion brings us thus together once more, tortured our slumbering senses with no impatience of duration, yet, my Monos, it was a century still.

Monos. Say, rather, a point in the vague infinity. Unquestionably, it was in the Earth's dotage that I died. Wearied at heart with anxieties which had their origin in the general turmoil and decay, I succumbed to the fierce fever. After some few days of pain, and many of dreamy delirium replete with ecstasy, the manifestations of which you mistook for pain, while I longed but was impotent to undeceive you—after some days there

* The word "*purification*" seems here to be used with reference to its root in the Greek πυρ fire

came upon me, as you have said, a breathless and motionless torpor; and this was termed *Death* by those who stood around me.

Words are vague things. My condition did not deprive me of sentience. It appeared to me not greatly dissimilar to the extreme quiescence of him, who, having slumbered long and profoundly, lying motionless and fully prostrate in a midsummer noon, begins to steal slowly back into consciousness, through the mere sufficiency of his sleep, and without being awakened by external disturbances.

I breathed no longer. The pulses were still. The heart had ceased to beat. Volition had not departed, but was powerless. The senses were unusually active, although eccentrically so—assuming often each other's functions at random. The taste and the smell were inextricably confounded, and became one sentiment, abnormal and intense. The rose-water with which your tenderness had moistened my lips to the last, affected me with sweet fancies of flowers—fantastic flowers, far more lovely than any of the old Earth, but whose prototypes we have here blooming around us. The eyelids, transparent and bloodless, offered no complete impediment to vision. As volition was in abeyance, the balls could not roll in their sockets—but all objects within the range of the visual hemisphere were seen with more or less distinctness; the rays which fell upon the external retina, or into the corner of the eye, producing a more vivid effect than those which struck the front or interior surface. Yet, in the former instance, this effect was so far anomalous that I appreciated it only as *sound*—sound sweet or discordant as the matters presenting themselves at my side were light or dark in shade—curved or angular in outline. The hearing, at the same

time, although excited in degree, was not irregular in action—estimating real sounds with an extravagance of precision, not less than of sensibility. Touch had undergone a modification more peculiar. Its impressions were tardily received, but pertinaciously retained, and resulted always in the highest physical pleasure. Thus the pressure of your sweet fingers upon my eyelids, at first only recognized through vision, at length, long after their removal, filled my whole being with a sensual delight immeasurable. I say with a sensual delight. *All* my perceptions were purely sensual. The materials furnished the passive brain by the senses were not in the least degree wrought into shape by the deceased understanding. Of pain there was some little; of pleasure there was much; but of moral pain or pleasure none at all. Thus your wild sobs floated into my ear with all their mournful cadences, and were appreciated in their every variation of sad tone; but they were soft musical sounds and no more; they conveyed to the extinct reason no intimation of the sorrows which gave them birth; while the large and constant tears which fell upon my face, telling the bystanders of a heart which broke, thrilled every fibre of my frame with ecstasy alone. And this was in truth the *Death* of which these bystanders spoke reverently, in low whispers—you, sweet Una, gaspingly, with loud cries.

They attired me for the coffin—three or four dark figures which flitted busily to and fro. As these crossed the direct line of my vision they affected me as *forms;* but upon passing to my side their images impressed me with the idea of shrieks, groans, and other dismal expressions of terror, or horror, or of wo. You alone, habited in a white robe, passed in all directions musically about me.

The day waned; and, as its light faded away, I became possessed by a vague uneasiness—an anxiety such as the sleeper feels when sad real sounds fall continuously within his ear—low distant bell-tones, solemn, at long but equal intervals, and commingling with melancholy dreams. Night arrived; and with its shadows a heavy discomfort. It oppressed my limbs with the oppression of some dull weight, and was palpable. There was also a moaning sound, not unlike the distant reverberation of surf, but more continuous, which, beginning with the first twilight, had grown in strength with the darkness. Suddenly lights were brought into the room, and this reverberation became forthwith interrupted into frequent unequal bursts of the same sound, but less dreary and less distinct. The ponderous oppression was in a great measure relieved; and, issuing from the flame of each lamp, (for there were many,) there flowed unbrokenly into my ears a strain of melodious monotone. And when now, dear Una, approaching the bed upon which I lay outstretched, you sat gently by my side, breathing odor from your sweet lips, and pressing them upon my brow, there arose tremulously within my bosom, and mingling with the merely physical sensations which circumstances had called forth, a something akin to sentiment itself—a feeling that, half appreciating, half responded to your earnest love and sorrow; but this feeling took no root in the pulseless heart, and seemed indeed rather a shadow than a reality, and faded quickly away, first into extreme quiescence, and then into a purely sensual pleasure as before.

And now, from the wreck and the chaos of the usual senses, there appeared to have arisen within me a sixth, all perfect. In its exercise I found a

wild delight—yet a delight still physical, inasmuch as the understanding had in it no part. Motion in the animal frame had fully ceased. No muscle quivered; no nerve thrilled; no artery throbbed. But there seemed to have sprung up in the brain, *that* of which no words could convey to the merely human intelligence even an indistinct conception. Let me term it a mental pendulous pulsation. It was the moral embodiment of man's abstract idea of *Time*. By the absolute equalization of this movement—or of such as this—had the cycles of the firmamental orbs themselves, been adjusted. By its aid I measured the irregularities of the clock upon the mantel, and of the watches of the attendants. Their tickings came sonorously to my ears. The slightest deviations from the true proportion—and these deviations were omniprævalent—affected me just as violations of abstract truth were wont, on earth, to affect the moral sense. Although no two of the time-pieces in the chamber struck the individual seconds accurately together, yet I had no difficulty in holding steadily in mind the tones, and the respective momentary errors of each. And this —this keen, perfect, self-existing sentiment of *duration*—this sentiment existing (as man could not possibly have conceived it to exist) independently of any succession of events—this idea—this sixth sense, upspringing from the ashes of the rest, was the first obvious and certain step of the intemporal soul upon the threshold of the temporal Eternity.

It was midnight; and you still sat by my side. All others had departed from the chamber of Death. They had deposited me in the coffin. The lamps burned flickeringly; for this I knew by the tremulousness of the monotonous strains. But, suddenly these strains diminished in distinctness and in

volume. Finally they ceased. The perfume in my nostrils died away. Forms affected my vision no longer. The oppression of the Darkness uplifted itself from my bosom. A dull shock like that of electricity pervaded my frame, and was followed by total loss of the idea of contact. All of what man has termed sense was merged in the sole consciousness of entity, and in the one abiding sentiment of duration. The mortal body had been at length stricken with the hand of the deadly *Decay*.

Yet had not all of sentience departed; for the consciousness and the sentiment remaining supplied some of its functions by a lethargic intuition. I appreciated the direful change now in operation upon the flesh, and, as the dreamer is sometimes aware of the bodily presence of one who leans over him, so, sweet Una, I still dully felt that you sat by my side. So, too, when the noon of the second day came, I was not unconscious of those movements which displaced you from my side, which confined me within the coffin, which deposited me within the hearse, which bore me to the grave, which lowered me within it, which heaped heavily the mould upon me, and which thus left me, in blackness and corruption, to my sad and solemn slumbers with the worm.

And here, in the prison-house which has few secrets to disclose, there rolled away days and weeks and months; and the soul watched narrowly each second as it flew, and, without effort, took record of its flight—without effort and without object.

A year passed. The consciousness of *being* had grown hourly more indistinct, and that of mere *locality* had, in great measure, usurped its position. The idea of entity was becoming merged in that of *place*. The narrow space immediately surrounding what had been the body, was now growing to be the

body itself. At length, as often happens to the sleeper (by sleep and its world alone is *Death* imagined —at length, as sometimes happened on Earth to the deep slumberer, when some flitting light half startled him into awaking, yet left him half enveloped in dreams—so to me, in the strict embrace of the *Shadow*, came *that* light which alone might have had power to startle—the light of enduring *Love*. Men toiled at the grave in which I lay darkling. They upthrew the damp earth. Upon my mouldering bones there descended the coffin of Una.

And now again all was void. That nebulous light had been extinguished. That feeble thrill had vibrated itself into quiescence. Many *lustra* had supervened. Dust had returned to dust. The worm had food no more. The sense of being had at length utterly departed, and there reigned in its stead—instead of all things—dominant and perpetual —the autocrats *Place* and *Time*. For *that* which *was not*—for that which had no form—for that which had no thought—for that which had no sentience—for that which was soulless, yet of which matter formed no portion—for all this nothingness, yet for all this immortality, the grave was still a home, and the corrosive hours, co-mates.

THE

CONVERSATION OF EIROS AND CHARMION

Πυρ σοι προσοισω
I will bring fire to thee.
Euripides—Androm:

EIROS

WHY do you call me Eiros?

CHARMION

So henceforward will you always be called. You must forget, too, *my* earthly name, and speak to me as Charmion.

EIROS

This is indeed no dream!

CHARMION

Dreams are with us no more;—but of these mysteries anon. I rejoice to see you looking life-like and rational. The film of the shadow has already passed from off your eyes. Be of heart, and fear nothing. Your allotted days of stupor have expired; and, to-morrow, I will myself induct you into the full joys and wonders of your novel existence.

EIROS

True—I feel no stupor—none at all. The wild sickness and the terrible darkness have left me, and

I hear no longer that mad, rushing, horrible sound, like the "voice of many waters." Yet my senses are bewildered, Charmion, with the keenness of their perception of *the new*.

CHARMION

A few days will remove all this;—but I fully understand you, and feel for you. It is now ten earthly years since I underwent what you undergo—yet the remembrance of it hangs by me still. You have now suffered all of pain, however, which you will suffer in Aidenn.

EIROS

In Aidenn?

CHARMION

In Aidenn.

EIROS

Oh God!—pity me, Charmion!—I am overburthened with the majesty of all things—of the unknown now known—of the speculative Future merged in the august and certain Present.

CHARMION.

Grapple not now with such thoughts. To-morrow we will speak of this. Your mind wavers, and its agitation will find relief in the exercise of simple memories. Look not around, nor forward—but back. I am burning with anxiety to hear the details of that stupendous event which threw you among us. Tell me of it. Let us converse of familiar things, in the old familiar language of the world which has so fearfully perished.

EIROS

Most fearfully, fearfully!—this is indeed no dream.

CHARMION

Dreams are no more. Was I much mourned, my Eiros?

EIROS

Mourned, Charmion?—oh deeply. To that last hour of all, there hung a cloud of intense gloom and devout sorrow over your household.

CHARMION

And that last hour—speak of it. Remember that, beyond the naked fact of the catastrophe itself, I know nothing. When, coming out from among mankind, I passed into Night through the Grave—at that period, if I remember aright, the calamity which overwhelmed you was utterly unanticipated. But, indeed, I knew little of the speculative philosophy of the day.

EIROS

The individual calamity was, as you say, entirely unanticipated; but analogous misfortunes had been long a subject of discussion with astronomers. I need scarce tell you, my friend, that, even when you left us, men had agreed to understand those passages in the most holy writings which speak of the final destructions of all things by fire, as having reference to the orb of the earth alone. But in regard to the immediate agency of the ruin, speculation had been at fault from that epoch in astronomical knowledge in which the comets were divested of the terrors

of flame. The very moderate density of these bodies had been well established. They had been observed to pass among the satellites of Jupiter, without bringing about any sensible alteration either in the masses or in the orbits of these secondary planets. We had long regarded the wanderers as vapory creations of inconceivable tenuity, and as altogether incapable of doing injury to our substantial globe, even in the event of contact. But contact was not in any degree dreaded; for the elements of all the comets were accurately known. That among *them* we should look for the agency of the threatened fiery destruction had been for many years considered an inadmissible idea. But wonders and wild fancies had been, of late days, strangely rife among mankind; and, although it was only with a few of the ignorant that actual apprehension prevailed, upon the announcement by astronomers of a *new* comet, yet this announcement was generally received with I know not what of agitation and mistrust.

The elements of the strange orb were immediately calculated, and it was at once conceded by all observers, that its path, at perihelion, would bring it into very close proximity with the earth. There were two or three astronomers, of secondary note, who resolutely maintained that a contact was inevitable. I cannot very well express to you the effect of this intelligence upon the people. For a few short days they would not believe an assertion which their intellect, so long employed among worldly considerations, could not in any manner grasp. But the truth of a vitally important fact soon makes its way into the understanding of even the most stolid. Finally, all men saw that astronomical knowledge lied not, and they awaited the comet.

Its approach was not, at first, seemingly rapid; nor was its appearance of very unusual character. It was of a dull red, and had little perceptible train. For seven or eight days we saw no material increase in its apparent diameter, and but a partial alteration in its color. Meantime, the ordinary affairs of men were discarded, and all interest absorbed in a growing discussion, instituted by the philosophic, in respect to the cometary nature. Even the grossly ignorant aroused their sluggish capacities to such considerations. The learned *now* gave their intellect—their soul—to no such points as the allaying of fear, or to the sustenance of loved theory. They sought—they panted for right views. They groaned for perfected knowledge. *Truth* arose in the purity of her strength and exceeding majesty, and the wise bowed down and adored.

That material injury to our globe or to its inhabitants would result from the apprehended contact, was an opinion which hourly lost ground among the wise; and the wise were now freely permitted to rule the reason and the fancy of the crowd. It was demonstrated, that the density of the comet's *nucleus* was far less than that of our rarest gas; and the harmless passage of a similar visitor among the satellites of Jupiter was a point strongly insisted upon, and which served greatly to allay terror. Theologists, with an earnestness fear-enkindled, dwelt upon the biblical prophecies, and expounded them to the people with a directness and simplicity of which no previous instance had been known. That the final destruction of the earth must be brought about by the agency of fire, was urged with a spirit that enforced every where conviction; and that the comets were of no fiery nature (as all men now knew) was a truth which relieved all, in a great

measure, from the apprehension of the great calamity foretold. It is noticeable that the popular prejudices and vulgar errors in regard to pestilences and wars—errors which were wont to prevail upon every appearance of a comet—were now altogether unknown. As if by some sudden convulsive exertion, reason had at once hurled superstition from her throne. The feeblest intellect had derived vigor from excessive interest.

What minor evils might arise from the contact were points of elaborate question. The learned spoke of slight geological disturbances, of probable alterations in climate, and consequently in vegetation; of possible magnetic and electric influences. Many held that no visible or perceptible effect would in any manner be produced. While such discussions were going on, their subject gradually approached, growing larger in apparent diameter, and of a more brilliant lustre. Mankind grew paler as it came. All human operations were suspended.

There was an epoch in the course of the general sentiment when the comet had attained, at length, a size surpassing that of any previously recorded visitation. The people now, dismissing any lingering hope that the astronomers were wrong, experienced all the certainty of evil. The chimerical aspect of their terror was gone. The hearts of the stoutest of our race beat violently within their bosoms. A very few days sufficed, however, to merge even such feelings in sentiments more unendurable. We could no longer apply to the strange orb any *accustomed* thoughts. Its *historical* attributes had disappeared. It oppressed us with a hideous *novelty* of emotion. We saw it not as an astronomical phenomenon in the heavens, but as an incubus

upon our hearts, and a shadow upon our brains. It had taken, with inconceivable rapidity, the character of a gigantic mantle of rare flame, extending from horizon to horizon.

Yet a day, and men breathed with greater freedom. It was clear that we were already within the influence of the comet; yet we lived. We even felt an unusual elasticity of frame and vivacity of mind. The exceeding tenuity of the object of our dread was apparent; for all heavenly objects were plainly visible through it. Meantime, our vegetation had perceptibly altered; and we gained faith, from this predicted circumstance, in the foresight of the wise. A wild luxuriance of foliage, utterly unknown before, burst out upon every vegetable thing.

Yet another day—and the evil was not altogether upon us. It was now evident that its nucleus would first reach us. A wild change had come over all men; and the first sense of *pain* was the wild signal for general lamentation and horror. This first sense of pain lay in a rigorous constriction of the breast and lungs, and an insufferable dryness of the skin. It could not be denied that our atmosphere was radically affected; the conformation of this atmosphere and the possible modifications to which it might be subjected, were now the topics of discussion. The result of investigation sent an electric thrill of the intensest terror through the universal heart of man.

It had been long known that the air which encircled us was a compound of oxygen and nitrogen gases, in the proportion of twenty-one measures of oxygen, and seventy-nine of nitrogen, in every one hundred of the atmosphere. Oxygen, which was the principle of combustion, and the vehicle of heat, was absolutely necessary to the support of animal life, and was the

most powerful and energetic agent in nature. Nitrogen, on the contrary, was incapable of supporting either animal life or flame. An unnatural excess of oxygen would result, it had been ascertained, in just such an elevation of the animal spirits as we had latterly experienced. It was the pursuit, the extension of the idea, which had engendered awe. What would be the result of *a total extraction of the nitrogen?* A combustion irresistible, all-devouring, omni-prevalent, immediate;—the entire fulfilment, in all their minute and terrible details, of the fiery and horror-inspiring denunciations of the prophecies of the Holy Book.

Why need I paint, Charmion, the now disenchained frenzy of mankind? That tenuity in the comet which had previously inspired us with hope, was now the source of the bitterness of despair. In its impalpable gaseous character we clearly perceived the consummation of Fate. Meantime a day again passed—bearing away with it the last shadow of Hope. We gasped in the rapid modification of the air. The red blood bounded tumultuously through its strict channels. A furious delirium possessed all men; and, with arms rigidly outstretched towards the threatening heavens, they trembled and shrieked aloud. But the nucleus of the destroyer was now upon us;—even here in Aidenn, I shudder while I speak. Let me be brief—brief as the ruin that overwhelmed. For a moment there was a wild lurid light alone, visiting and penetrating all things. Then—let us bow down, Charmion, before the excessive majesty of the great God!—then, there came a shouting and pervading sound, as if from the mouth itself of HIM; while the whole incumbent mass of ether in which we existed, burst at once into a species of intense flame, for whose surpassing

brilliancy and all-fervid heat even the angels in the high Heaven of pure knowledge have no name. Thus ended all.

THE LITERATI

OF CRITICISM—PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

[In 1846, Mr. Poe published in *The Lady's Book* a series of six articles, entitled "The Literati of New-York City," in which he professed to give "some honest opinions at random respecting their autorial merits, with occasional words of personality." The series was introduced by the following paragraphs, and the personal sketches were given in the order in which they are here reprinted, from "George Bush" to "Richard Adams Locke." The other notices of American and foreign writers, were contributed by Mr. Poe to various journals, chiefly in the last four or five years of his life.]

IN a criticism on Bryant I was at some pains in pointing out the distinction between the popular "opinion" of the merits of cotemporary authors, and that held and expressed of them in private literary society. The former species of "opinion" can be called "opinion" only by courtesy. It is the public's own, just as we consider a book our own when we have bought it. In general, this opinion is adopted from the journals of the day, and I have endeavored to show that the cases are rare indeed in which these journals express any other sentiment about books than such as may be attributed directly or indirectly to the authors of the books. The most "popular," the most "successful" writers among us, (for a brief period, at least,) are, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, persons of mere address, perseverance, effrontery—in a word, busybodies, toadies, quacks. These people easily suc-

ceed in *boring* editors (whose attention is too often entirely engrossed by politics or other "business" matter) into the admission of favorite notices written or caused to be written by interested parties—or, at least, into the admission of *some* notice where, under ordinary circumstances, *no* notice would be given at all. In this way ephemeral "reputations" are manufactured, which, for the most part, serve all the purposes designed—that is to say, the putting money into the purse of the quack and the quack's publisher; for there never was a quack who could be brought to comprehend the value of mere fame. Now, men of genius will not resort to these manœuvres, because genius involves in its very essence a scorn of chicanery; and thus for a time the quacks always get the advantage of them, both in respect to pecuniary profit and what *appears* to be public esteem.

There is another point of view, too. Your literary quacks court, in especial, the personal acquaintance of those "connected with the press." Now these latter, even when penning a voluntary, that is to say, an uninstigated notice of the book of an acquaintance, feel as if writing not so much for the eye of the public as for the eye of the acquaintance, and the notice is fashioned accordingly. The bad points of the work are slurred over, and the good ones brought out into the best light, all this through a feeling akin to that which makes it unpleasant to speak ill of one to one's face. In the case of men of genius, editors, as a general rule, have no such delicacy—for the simple reason that, as a general rule, they have no acquaintance with these men of genius, a class proverbial for shunning society.

But the very editors who hesitate at saying in print an ill word of an author personally known, are

usually the most frank in speaking about him privately. In literary society, they seem bent upon avenging the wrongs self-inflicted upon their own consciences. Here, accordingly, the quack is treated as he deserves—even a little more harshly than he deserves—by way of striking a balance. True merit, on the same principle, is apt to be slightly overrated; but, upon the whole, there is a close approximation to absolute honesty of opinion; and this honesty is farther secured by the mere trouble to which it puts one in conversation to model one's countenance to a falsehood. We place on paper without hesitation a tissue of flatteries, to which in society we could not give utterance, for our lives, without either blushing or laughing outright.

For these reasons there exists a very remarkable discrepancy between the apparent public opinion of any given author's merits, and the opinion which is expressed of him orally by those who are best qualified to judge. For example, Mr. Hawthorne, the author of "Twice-Told Tales," is scarcely recognised by the press or by the public, and when noticed at all, is noticed merely to be damned by faint praise. Now, my own opinion of him is, that, although his walk is limited, and he is fairly to be charged with mannerism, treating all subjects in a similar tone of dreamy *inuendo*, yet in this walk he evinces extraordinary genius, having no rival either in America or elsewhere—and this opinion I have never heard gainsaid by any one literary person in the country. That this opinion, however, is a spoken and not a written one, is referable to the facts, first, that Mr. Hawthorne *is* a poor man, and, second, that he *is not* an ubiquitous quack.

Again, of Mr. Longfellow, who, although a little quacky *per se*, has, through his social and literary

position as a man of property and a professor at Harvard, a whole legion of active quacks at his control—of *him* what is the apparent popular opinion? Of course, that he is a poetical phenomenon, as entirely without fault, as is the luxurious paper upon which his poems are invariably borne to the public eye. In private society he is regarded with one voice as a poet of far more than usual ability, a skilful artist and a well-read man, but as less remarkable in either capacity than as a determined imitator and a dexterous adapter of the ideas of other people. For years I have conversed with no literary person who did not entertain precisely these ideas of Professor L.; and, in fact, on all literary topics, there is in society a seemingly wonderful coincidence of opinion. The author accustomed to seclusion, and mingling for the first time with those who have been associated with him only through their works, is astonished and delighted at finding common to all whom he meets, conclusions which he had blindly fancied were attained by himself alone, and in opposition to the judgment of mankind.

In the series of papers which I now propose, my design is, in giving my own unbiased opinion of the *literati* (male and female) of New York, to give at the same time very closely, if not with absolute accuracy, that of conversational society in literary circles. It must be expected, of course, that, in innumerable particulars, I shall differ from the voice, that is to say, from what appears to be the voice of the public —but this is a matter of no consequence whatever.

New York literature may be taken as a fair representation of that of the country at large. The city itself is the focus of American letters. Its authors include, perhaps, one-fourth of all in America, and the influence they exert on their

brethren, if seemingly silent, is not the less extensive and decisive. As I shall have to speak of many individuals, my limits will not permit me to speak of them otherwise than in brief; but this brevity will be merely consistent with the design, which is that of simple *opinion*, with little of either argument or detail. With one or two exceptions, I am well acquainted with every author to be introduced, and I shall avail myself of the acquaintance to convey, generally, some idea of the personal appearance of all who, in this regard, would be likely to interest my readers. As any precise order or arrangement seems unnecessary and may be inconvenient, I shall maintain none. It will be understood that, without reference to supposed merit or demerit, each individual is introduced absolutely at random.

GEORGE BUSH

THE REV. GEORGE BUSH is Professor of Hebrew in the University of New York, and has long been distinguished for the extent and variety of his attainments in oriental literature; indeed, as an oriental linguist, it is probable that he has no equal among us. He has published a great deal, and his books have always the good fortune to attract attention throughout the civilized world. His "Treatise on the Millenium" is, perhaps, that of his earlier compositions by which he is most extensively as well as most favorably known. Of late days he has created a singular commotion in the realm of theology, by his "Anastasis, or the Doctrine of the Resurrection: in which it is shown that the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is not sanctioned by Reason or Revelation." This work has been zealously attacked, and as zealously defended by the professor and his friends. There can be no doubt that, up to this period, the Bushites have had the best of the battle. The "Anastasis" is lucidly, succinctly, vigorously, and logically written, and proves, in my opinion, everything that it attempts—provided we admit the imaginary axioms from which it starts; and this is as much as can be well said of any theological disquisition under the sun. It might be hinted, too, in reference as well to Professor Bush as to his opponents, "*que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient.*" A subsequent work on "The Soul," by the author of "Anastasis," has made nearly as much noise as the "Anastasis" itself.

Taylor, who wrote so ingeniously "The Natural History of Enthusiasm," might have derived many a valuable hint from the study of Professor Bush. No man is more ardent in his theories; and these latter are neither few nor commonplace. He is a Mesmerist and a Swedenborgian—has lately been engaged in editing Swedenborg's works, publishing them in numbers. He converses with fervor, and often with eloquence. Very probably he will establish an independent church.

He is one of the most amiable men in the world, universally respected and beloved. His frank, unpretending simplicity of demeanor, is especially winning.

In person he is tall, nearly six feet, and spare, with large bones. His countenance expresses rather benevolence and profound earnestness, than high intelligence. The eyes are piercing; the other features, in general, massive. The forehead, phrenologically, indicates causality and comparison, with deficient ideality—the organization which induces strict logicality from insufficient premises. He walks with a slouching gait and with an air of abstraction. His dress is exceedingly plain. In respect to the arrangement about his study, he has many of the Magliabechian habits. He is, perhaps, fifty-five years of age, and seems to enjoy good health.

GEORGE H. COLTON

MR. COLTON is noted as the author of "Tecumseh," and as the originator and editor of "The American Review," a Whig magazine of the higher (that is to say, of the five dollar) class. I must not be understood as meaning any disrespect to the work. It is, in my opinion, by far the best of its order in this country, and is supported in the way of contribution by many of the very noblest intellects. Mr. Colton, if in nothing else, has shown himself a man of genius in his successful establishment of the magazine within so brief a period. It is now commencing its second year, and I can say, from my own personal knowledge that its circulation exceeds two thousand—it is probably about two thousand five hundred. So marked and immediate a success has never been attained by any of our five dollar magazines, with the exception of "The Southern Literary Messenger," which, in the course of nineteen months, (subsequent to the seventh from its commencement,) attained a circulation of rather more than five thousand.

I cannot conscientiously call Mr. Colton a good editor, although I think that he will finally be so. He improves wonderfully with experience. His present defects are timidity and a lurking taint of partiality, amounting to positive prejudice (in the vulgar sense) for the literature of the Puritans. I do not think, however, that he is at all aware of such prepossession. His taste is rather unexceptionable than positively good. He has not, perhaps, suffi-

cient fire within himself to appreciate it in others. Nevertheless, he endeavors to do so, and in this endeavor is not inapt to take opinions at secondhand—to adopt, I mean, the opinions of others. He is nervous, and a very trifling difficulty disconcerts him, without getting the better of a sort of dogged perseverance, which will make a thoroughly successful man of him in the end. He is (classically) well educated.

As a poet he has done better things than "Tecumseh," in whose length he has committed a radical and irreparable error, sufficient in itself to destroy a far better book. Some portions of it are truly poetical; very many portions belong to a high order of eloquence; it is invariably well versified, and has no glaring defects, but, upon the whole, is insufferably tedious. Some of the author's shorter compositions, published anonymously in his magazine, have afforded indications even of genius.

Mr. Colton is marked in his personal appearance. He is probably not more than thirty, but an air of constant thought (with a pair of spectacles) causes him to seem somewhat older. He is about five feet eight or nine in height, and fairly proportioned—neither stout nor thin. His forehead is quite intellectual. His mouth has a peculiar expression difficult to describe. Hair light and generally in disorder. He converses fluently, and, upon the whole, well, but grandiloquently, and with a tone half tragical half pulpital.

In character he is in the highest degree estimable, a most sincere, high-minded, and altogether honorable man. He is unmarried.

N. P. WILLIS

WHATEVER may be thought of Mr. Willis's talents, there can be no doubt about the fact that, both as an author and as a man, he has made a good deal of noise in the world—at least for an American. His literary life, in especial, has been one continual *émeute;* but then his literary character is modified or impelled in a very remarkable degree by his personal one. His success (for in point of fame, if of nothing else, he has certainly been successful) is to be attributed, one-third to his mental ability and two-thirds to his physical temperament—the latter goading him into the accomplishment of what the former merely gave him the means of accomplishing.

At a very early age Mr. Willis seems to have arrived at an understanding that, in a republic such as ours, the *mere* man of letters must ever be a cipher, and endeavored, accordingly, to unite the *éclat* of the littérateur with that of the man of fashion or of society. He "pushed himself," went much into the world, made friends with the gentler sex, "delivered" poetical addresses, wrote "scriptural" poems, travelled, sought the intimacy of noted women, and got into quarrels with notorious men. All these things served his purpose—if, indeed, I am right in supposing that he had any purpose at all. It is quite probable that, as before hinted, he acted only in accordance with his physical temperament; but, be this as it may, his personal greatly advanced, if it did not

altogether establish his literary fame. I have often carefully considered whether, without the *physique* of which I speak, there is that in the absolute *morale* of Mr. Willis which would have earned him reputation as a man of letters, and my conclusion is, that he could not have failed to become noted in *some* degree under almost any circumstances, but that about two-thirds (as above stated) of his appreciation by the public should be attributed to those *adventures* which grew immediately out of his animal constitution.

He received what is usually regarded as a "good education"—that is to say, he graduated at college; but his education, in the path he pursued, was worth to him, on account of his extraordinary *savoir faire*, fully twice as much as would have been its value in any common case. No man's knowledge is more available, no man has exhibited greater *tact* in the seemingly casual display of his wares. With *him*, at least, a little learning is *no* dangerous thing. He possessed at one time, I believe, the average quantum of American collegiate lore—"a little Latin and less Greek," a smattering of physical and metaphysical science, and (I should judge) a *very* little of the mathematics—but all this must be considered as mere *guess* on my part. Mr. Willis speaks French with some fluency, and Italian not quite so well.

Within the ordinary range of *belles lettres* authorship, he has evinced much versatility. If called on to designate him by any general literary title, I might term him a magazinist—for his compositions have invariably the species of *effect*, with the brevity which the magazine demands. We may view him as a paragraphist, an essayist, or rather "sketcher," a tale writer, and a poet.

In the first capacity he fails. His points, however

good when deliberately wrought, are too *recherchés* to be put hurriedly before the public eye. Mr. W. has by no means the *readiness* which the editing a newspaper demands. He composes (as did Addison, and as do many of the most brilliant and seemingly *dashing* writers of the present day,) with great labor and frequent erasure and interlineation. His MSS., in this regard, present a very singular appearance, and indicate the *vacillation* which is, perhaps, the leading trait of his character. A newspaper, too, in its longer articles—its "leaders"—very frequently demands argumentation, and here Mr. W. is remarkably out of his element. His exuberant *fancy* leads him over hedge and ditch—anywhere from the main road; and, besides, he is far too readily self-dispossessed. With time at command, however, his great *tact* stands him instead of all argumentative power, and enables him to overthrow an antagonist without permitting the latter to see how he is overthrown. A fine example of this "management" is to be found in Mr. W.'s reply to a very inconsiderate attack upon his social standing, made by one of the editors of the New York "Courier and Inquirer." I have always regarded this reply as the highest evidence of its author's ability, as a masterpiece of ingenuity, if not of absolute genius. The skill of the whole lay in this—that, without troubling himself to refute the charges themselves brought against him by Mr. Raymond, he put forth his strength in rendering them null, to all intents and purposes, by obliterating, incidentally and without letting his design be perceived, all *the impression* these charges were calculated to convey. But this reply can be called a newspaper article only on the ground of its having appeared in a newspaper.

As a writer of "sketches," properly so called, Mr.

Willis is unequalled. Sketches—especially of society—are his *forte*, and they are so for no other reason than that they afford him the best opportunity of introducing the personal Willis—or, more distinctly, because this species of composition is most susceptible of impression from his personal character. The *degagé* tone of this kind of writing, too, best admits and encourages that *fancy* which Mr. W. possesses in the most extraordinary degree; it is in fancy that he reigns supreme; this, more than any one other quality, and, indeed, more than all his other *literary* qualities combined, has made him what he is. It is this which gives him the originality, the freshness, the point, the piquancy, which appear to be the immediate, but which are, in fact, the mediate sources of his popularity.*

*As, by metaphysicians and in ordinary discourse, the word *fancy* is used with very little determinateness of meaning, I may be pardoned for repeating here what I have elsewhere said on this topic. I shall thus be saved much misapprehension in regard to the term—one which will necessarily be often employed in the course of this series.

"Fancy," says the author of "Aids to Reflection," (who aided reflection to much better purpose in his "Genevieve") —"fancy combines—imagination creates" This was intended and has been received as a distinction, but it is a distinction without a difference—without a difference even of degree. The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination, and neither at all. Novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can imagine nothing which does not really exist; if it could, it would create not only ideally but substantially, as do the thoughts of God. It may be said, "We imagine a griffin, yet a griffin does not exist." Not the griffin, certainly, but its component parts. It is no more than a collation of known limbs, features, qualities. Thus with all which claims to be new, which appears to be a creation of the intellect—all is re-soluble into the old. The wildest effort of the mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

Imagination, fancy, fantasy, and humor, have in common the elements combination and novelty. The imagination is the artist of the four. From novel arrangements of old forms which present themselves to it, it selects such only as are harmonious; the result, of course, is *beauty* itself—using the word in its most extended sense and as inclusive of the sublime. The pure imagination chooses, *from either beauty or deformity*

In *tales* (written with deliberation for the magazines) he has shown greater *constructiveness* than I

only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as a general rule, partaking in character of sublimity or beauty in the ratio of the respective sublimity or beauty of the things combined, which are themselves still to be considered as atomic—that is to say, as previous combinations. But, as often analogously happens in physical chemistry, so not unfrequently does it occur in this chemistry of the intellect, that the admixture of two elements will result in a something that shall have nothing of the quality of one of them—or even nothing of the qualities of either. The range of imagination is thus unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that *beauty* which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test. But, in general, the richness of the matters combined, the facility of discovering combinable novelties worth combining, and *the absolute "chemical combination"* of the completed mass, are the particulars to be regarded in our estimate of imagination. It is this thorough harmony of an imaginative work which so often causes it to be undervalued by the undiscriminating, through the character of *obviousness* which is superinduced. We are apt to find ourselves asking *why it is that these combinations have never been imagined before?*

Now, when this question *does not occur*, when the harmony of the combination is comparatively neglected, and when, in addition to the element of novelty, there is introduced the sub-element of *unexpectedness*—when, for example, matters are brought into combination which not only have never been combined, but whose combination strikes us as a *difficulty happily overcome*, the result then appertains to the fancy, and is, to the majority of mankind, more grateful than the purely harmonious one—although, absolutely, it is less beautiful (or grand) for the reason that *it is* less harmonious.

Carrying its errors into excess—for, however enticing, they *are* errors still, or nature lies—fancy is at length found infringing upon the province of fantasy. The votaries of this latter delight not only in novelty and unexpectedness of combination, but in the *avoidance* of proportion. The result is, therefore, abnormal, and, to a healthy mind, affords less of pleasure through its novelty than of pain through its incoherence. When, proceeding a step farther, however, fancy seeks not merely disproportionate but incongruous or antagonistic elements, the effect is rendered more pleasurable by its greater positiveness, there is a merry effort of truth to shake from her that which is no property of hers, and we laugh outright in recognising humor.

The four faculties in question seem to me all of their class; but when either fancy or humor is expressed to gain an end, is pointed at a purpose—whenever either becomes objective in place of subjective, then it becomes, also, pure wit or sarcasm, just as the purpose is benevolent or malevolent.

should have given him credit for had I not read his compositions of this order—for in this faculty all his other works indicate a singular deficiency. The chief charm even of these tales, however, is still referable to *fancy*.

As a poet, Mr. Willis is not entitled, I think, to so high a rank as he may justly claim through his prose; and this for the reason that, although fancy is not inconsistent with any of the demands of those classes of prose composition which he has attempted, and, indeed, is a vital element of most of them, still it is at war (as will be understood from what I have said in the foot note) with that purity and perfection of *beauty* which are the soul of the poem proper. I wish to be understood as saying this *generally* of our author's poems. In some instances, seeming to *feel* the truth of my proposition, (that fancy should have no place in the loftier poesy,) he has denied it a place, as in "Melanie," and his Scriptural pieces; but, unfortunately, he has been unable to supply the void with the true imagination, and these poems consequently are deficient in vigor, in *stamen*. The Scriptural pieces are quite "correct," as the French have it, and are much admired by a certain set of readers, who judge of a poem, not by its effect on themselves, but by the effect which they imagine it *might* have upon themselves were they not unhappily soulless, and by the effect which they take it for granted it *does* have upon others. It cannot be denied, however, that these pieces are, in general tame, or indebted for what force they possess to the Scriptural passages of which they are merely paraphrastic. I quote what, in my own opinion, and in that of nearly all my friends, is really the truest poem ever written by Mr. Willis.

The shadows lay along Broadway,
'Twas near the twilight tide,
And slowly there a lady fair
Was walking in her pride—
Alone walked she, yet viewlessly
Walked spirits at her side.

Peace charmed the street beneath her feet
And honor charmed the air,
And all astir looked kind on her
And called her good as fair—
For all God ever gave to her
She kept with chary care.

She kept with care her beauties rare
From lovers warm and true,
For her heart was cold to all but gold,
And the rich came not to woo.
Ah, honored well are charms to sell
When priests the selling do!

Now, walking there was one more fair—
A slight girl, lily-pale,
And she had unseen company
To make the spirit quail—
'Twixt want and scorn she walked forlorn,
And nothing could avail.

No mercy now can clear her brow
For this world's peace to pray—
For, as love's wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman's heart gave way;
And the sin forgiven by Christ in heaven
By man is cursed alway.

There is about this little poem (evidently written in haste and through impulse) a true *imagination*. Its grace, dignity and pathos are impressive, and there is more in it of earnestness, of soul, than in anything I have seen from the pen of its author. His compositions, in general, have a taint of worldliness, of insincerity. The identical rhyme in the last

stanza is very noticeable, and the whole *finale* is feeble. It would be improved by making the last two lines precede the first two of the stanza.

In classifying Mr. W.'s writings I did not think it worth while to speak of him as a dramatist, because, although he has written plays, what they have of merit is altogether in their character of poem. Of his "Bianca Visconti" I have little to say;—it deserved to fail, and did, although it abounded in *eloquent* passages. "Tortesa" abounded in the same, but had a great many dramatic *points* well calculated to tell with a conventional audience. Its characters, with the exception of Tomaso, a drunken buffoon, had no character at all, and the *plot* was a tissue of absurdities, inconsequences and inconsistencies; yet I cannot help thinking it, upon the whole, the best play ever written by an American.

Mr. Willis has made very few attempts at criticism, and those few (chiefly newspaper articles) have not impressed me with a high idea of his analytic abilities, although with a *very* high idea of his taste and discrimination.

His *style* proper may be called extravagant, *bizarre*, pointed, epigrammatic without being antithetical, (this is very rarely the case,) but, through all its whimsicalities, graceful, classic and *accurate*. He is very seldom to be caught tripping in the minor morals. His English is *correct;* his most outrageous imagery is, at all events, unmixed.

Mr. Willis's career has naturally made him enemies among the envious host of dunces whom he has outstripped in the race for fame; and these his personal manner (a little tinctured with reserve, *brusquerie*, or even haughtiness) is by no means adapted to conciliate. He has innumerable warm friends, however, and is himself a warm friend. He

is impulsive, generous, bold, impetuous, vacillating, irregularly energetic—apt to be hurried into error, but incapable of deliberate wrong.

He is yet young, and, without being handsome, in the ordinary sense, is a remarkably well looking man. In height he is, perhaps, five feet eleven, and justly proportioned. His figure is put in the best light by the ease and assured grace of his carriage. His whole person and personal demeanor bear about them the traces of "good society." His face is somewhat too full, or rather heavy, in its lower portions. Neither his nose nor his forehead can be defended; the latter would puzzle phrenology. His eyes are a dull bluish gray, and small. His hair is of a rich brown, curling naturally and luxuriantly. His mouth is well cut; the teeth fine; the expression of the smile intellectual and winning. He converses little, *well* rather than fluently, and in a subdued tone. The portrait of him published about three years ago in "Graham's Magazine," conveys by no means so true an idea of the man as does the sketch (by Lawrence) inserted as frontispiece to a late collection of his poems.

WILLIAM M. GILLESPIE

MR. WILLIAM M. GILLESPIE aided Mr. Park Benjamin, I believe, some years ago, in the editorial conduct of "The New World," and has been otherwise connected with the periodical press of New York. He is more favorably known, however, as the author of a neat volume entitled "Rome as Seen by a New Yorker,"—a good title to a good book. The endeavor to convey Rome only by those impressions which would naturally be made upon an American, gives the work a certain air of originality—the rarest of all qualities in descriptions of the Eternal City. The style is pure and sparkling, although occasionally flippant and *dilletantesque*. The love of remark is much in the usual way—*selom les règles*—never very exceptionable, and never very profound.

Mr. Gillespie is not unaccomplished, converses readily on many topics, has some knowledge of Italian, French, and, I believe, of the classical tongues, with such proficiency in the mathematics as has obtained for him a professorship of civil engineering at Union College, Schenectady.

In character he has much general amiability, is warm-hearted, excitable, nervous. His address is somewhat awkward, but "insinuating" from its warmth and vivacity. Speaks continuously and rapidly, with a lisp which, at times, is by no means unpleasing; is fidgety, and never knows how to sit or to stand, or what to do with his hands and feet or his hat. In the street walks irregularly, mutters to

himself, and, in general, appears in a state of profound abstraction.

In person he is about five feet seven inches high, neither stout nor thin, angularly proportioned; eyes large and dark hazel, hair dark and curling, an ill-formed nose, fine teeth, and a smile of peculiar sweetness; nothing remarkable about the forehead. The general expression of the countenance when in repose is rather unprepossessing, but animation very much alters its character. He is probably thirty years of age—unmarried.

CHARLES F. BRIGGS

MR. BRIGGS is better known as Harry Franco, *a nom de plume* assumed since the publication, in the "Knickerbocker Magazine," of his series of papers called "Adventures of Harry Franco." He also wrote for "The Knickerbocker" some articles entitled "The Haunted Merchant," which have been printed since as a novel, and from time to time subsequently has been a contributor to that journal. The two productions just mentioned have some merit. They depend for their effect upon the relation in a straightforward manner, just as one would talk, of the most commonplace events—a kind of writing which, to ordinary, and especially to indolent intellects, has a very observable charm. To cultivated or to active minds it is in an equal degree distasteful, even when claiming the merit of originality. Mr. Briggs's manner, however, is an obvious imitation of Smollett, and, as usual with all imitation, produces an unfavorable impression upon those conversant with the original. It is a common failing, also, with imitators, to out-Herod Herod in aping the peculiarities of the model, and too frequently the faults are more pertinaciously exaggerated than the merits. Thus, the author of "Harry Franco" carries the simplicity of Smollett sometimes to insipidity, and his picturesque low-life is made to degenerate into sheer vulgarity.

If Mr. Briggs has a *forte*, it is a Flemish fidelity that omits nothing, whether agreeable or disagreeable; but I cannot call this *forte* a virtue. He has

also some humor, but nothing of an original character. Occasionally he has written good things. A magazine article, called "Dobbs and his Cantelope," was quite easy and clever in its way; but the way is necessarily a small one. And I ought not to pass over without some allusion to it, his satirical novel of "Tom Pepper." As a novel, it really has not the slightest pretensions. To a genuine artist in literature, he is as Plumbe to Sully. Plumbe's daguerreotypes have more fidelity than any portrait ever put on canvas, and so Briggs's sketches of E. A. Duyckinck (Tibbings) and the author of Puffer Hopkins (Ferocious) are as lifelike as any portraits in words that have ever been drawn. But the subjects are little and mean, pretending and vulgar. Mr. Briggs would not succeed in delineating a gentleman. And some letters of his in Hiram Fuller's paper—perhaps for the reason that they run through a desert of stupidity—some letters of his, I say, under the apt signature of "Ferdinand Mendoza Pinto," are decidedly clever as examples of caricature—absurd, of course, but sharply absurd, so that, with a knowledge of their design, one could hardly avoid occasional laughter. I once thought Mr.Briggs could cause laughter only by his efforts at a serious kind of writing.

In connexion with Mr. John Bisco, he was the originator of the late "Broadway Journal"—my editorial association with that work not having commenced until the sixth or seventh number, although I wrote for it occasionally from the first. Among the principal papers contributed by Mr. B., were those discussing the paintings at the preceding exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in New York. I may be permitted to say, that there was scarcely a point in his whole series of criticisms on this sub-

ject at which I did not radically disagree with him. Whatever taste he has in art is, like his taste in letters, Flemish. There is a portrait painter for whom he has an unlimited admiration. The unfortunate gentleman is Mr. Page.

Mr. Briggs is about five feet six inches in height, somewhat slightly framed, with a sharp, thin face, narrow forehead, nose sufficiently prominent, mouth rather pleasant in expression, eyes not so good, gray and small, although occasionally brilliant. In dress he is apt to affect the artist, felicitating himself especially upon his personal acquaintance with artists and his general connoisseurship. He walks with a quick, nervous step. His address is quite good, frank and insinuating. His conversation has now and then the merit of humor, and more frequently of a smartness, allied to wit, but he has a perfect mania for contradiction, and it is sometimes impossible to utter an uninterrupted sentence in his hearing. He has much warmth of feeling, and is not a person to be disliked, although very apt to irritate and annoy. Two of his most marked characteristics are vacillation of purpose and a passion for being mysterious. He has, apparently, travelled; has some knowledge of French; has been engaged in a variety of employments; and now, I believe, occupies a lawyer's office in Nassau-street. He is from Cape Cod or Nantucket, is married, and is the centre of a little circle of rather intellectual people, of which the Kirklands, Lowell, and some other notabilities are honorary members. He goes little into general society, and seems about forty years of age.

WILLIAM KIRKLAND

MR. WILLIAM KIRKLAND—husband of the author of "A New Home"—has written much for the magazines, but has made no collection of his works. A series of "Letters from Abroad" have been among his most popular compositions. He was in Europe for some time, and is well acquainted with the French language and literature, as also with the German. He aided Dr. Turner in the late translation of Von Raumer's "America," published by the Langleys. One of his best magazine papers appeared in "The Columbian" —a review of the London Foreign Quarterly for April, 1844. The arrogance, ignorance, and self-glorification of the Quarterly, with its gross injustice towards everything un-British, were severely and palpably exposed, and its narrow malignity shown to be especially *mal-à-propos* in a journal exclusively devoted to foreign concerns, and therefore presumably imbued with something of a cosmopolitan spirit. An article on "English and American Monthlies" in Godey's Magazine, and one entitled "Our English Visitors," in "The Columbian," have also been extensively read and admired. A valuable essay on "The Tyranny of Public Opinion in the United States," (published in "The Columbian" for December, 1845), demonstrates the truth of Jefferson's assertion, that in this country, which has set the world an example of physical liberty, the inquisition of popular sentiment overrules in practice the freedom asserted in theory by the laws. "The

West, the Paradise of the Poor," and "The United States' Census for 1830," the former in "The Democratic Review," the latter in "Hunt's Merchants' Magazine," with sundry essays in the daily papers, complete the list of Mr. Kirkland's works. It will be seen that he has written little, but that little is entitled to respect for its simplicity, and the evidence which it affords of scholarship and diligent research. Whatever Mr. Kirkland does is done carefully. He is occasionally very caustic, but seldom without cause. His style is vigorous, precise, and, notwithstanding his foreign acquirements, free from idiomatic peculiarities.

Mr. Kirkland is beloved by all who know him; in character mild, unassuming, benevolent, yet not without becoming energy at times; in person rather short and slight; features indistinctive; converses well and zealously, although his hearing is defective.

JOHN W. FRANCIS

DOCTOR FRANCIS although by no means a *litterateur*, cannot well be omitted in an account of the New York *literati*. In his capacity of physician and medical lecturer, he is far too well known to need comment. He was the pupil, friend and partner of Hossack—the pupil of Abernethy—connected in some manner with everything that has been well said or done medicinally in America. As a medical essayist he has always commanded the highest respect and attention. Among the *points* he has made at various times, I may mention his Anatomy of Drunkenness, his views of the Asiatic Cholera, his analysis of the Avon waters of the state, his establishment of the comparative immunity of the constitution from a second attack of yellow fever, and his pathological propositions on the charges wrought in the system by specific poisons through their assimilation—propositions remarkably sustained and enforced by recent discoveries of Liebig.

In unprofessional letters Doctor Francis has also accomplished much, although necessarily in a discursive manner. His biography of Chancellor Livingston, his Horticultural Discourse, his Discourse at the opening of the new hall of the New York Lyceum of Natural History, are (each in its way) models of fine writing just sufficiently toned down by an indomitable common sense. I had nearly forgotten to mention his admirable sketch of the personal associations of Bishop Berkley, of Newport.

Doctor Francis is one of the old spirits of the New York Historical Society. His philanthropy, his active, untiring beneficence, will for ever render his name a household word among the truly Christian of heart. His professional services and his purse are always at the command of the needy; few of our wealthiest men have ever contributed to the relief of distress so bountifully—none certainly with greater readiness or with warmer sympathy.

His person and manner are richly peculiar. He is short and stout, probably five feet eight in height, limbs of great muscularity and strength, the whole frame indicating prodigious vitality and energy—the latter is, in fact, the leading trait in his character. His head is large, massive—the features in keeping; complexion dark florid; eyes piercingly bright; mouth exceedingly mobile and expressive; hair gray, and worn in matted locks about the neck and shoulders—eyebrows to correspond, jagged and ponderous. His age is about fifty-eight. His general appearance is such as to arrest attention.

His address is the most genial that can be conceived, its *bonhommie* irresistible. He speaks in a loud, clear, hearty tone, dogmatically, with his head thrown back and his chest out; never waits for an introduction to anybody; slaps a perfect stranger on the back and calls him "Doctor" or "Learned Theban"; pats every lady on the head, and (if she be pretty and *petite*) designates her by some such title as "My Pocket Edition of the Lives of the Saints." His conversation proper is a sort of Roman punch made up of tragedy, comedy, and the broadest of all possible farce. He has a natural, felicitous flow of talk, always overswelling its boundaries and sweeping everything before it right and left. He is very earnest, intense, emphatic; thumps

the table with his fist; shocks the nerves of the ladies. His *forte*, after all, is humor, the richest conceivable—a compound of Swift, Rabelais, and the clown in the pantomime. He is married.

ANNA CORA MOWATT

MRS. MOWATT is in some respects a remarkable woman, and has undoubtedly wrought a deeper impression upon *the public* than any one of her sex in America.

She became first known through her recitations. To these she drew large and discriminating audiences in Boston, New York, and elsewhere to the north and east. Her subjects were much in the usual way of these exhibitions, including comic as well as serious pieces, chiefly in verse. In her selections she evinced no *very* refined taste, but was probably influenced by the elocutionary rather than by the literary value of her *programmes*. She read well; her voice was melodious; her youth and general appearance excited interest, but, upon the whole, she produced no great effect, and the enterprise may be termed unsuccessful, although the press, as is its wont, spoke in the most sonorous tone of her success.

It was during these recitations that her name, prefixed to occasional tales, sketches and brief poems in the magazines, first attracted an attention that, but for the recitations, it might not have attracted.

Her sketches and tales may be said to be *cleverly* written. They are lively, easy, *conventional*, scintillating with a species of sarcastic wit, which might be termed good were it in any respect original. In point of style—that is to say, of mere English, they are very respectable. One of the best of her prose papers is entitled "Ennui and its Antidote," published in "The Columbian Magazine" for June,

1845. The subject, however, is an exceedingly hackneyed one.

In looking carefully over her poems, I find no one entitled to commendation as a whole; in very few of them do I observe even noticeable passages, and I confess that I am surprised and disappointed at this result of my inquiry; nor can I make up my mind that there is not much latent poetical power in Mrs. Mowatt. From some lines addressed to Isabel M——, I copy the opening stanza as the most favorable specimen which I have seen of her verse.

> Forever vanished from thy cheek
> Is life's unfolding rose—
> Forever quenched the flashing smile
> That conscious beauty knows!
> Thine orbs are lustrous with a light
> Which ne'er illumes the eye
> Till heaven is bursting on the sight
> And earth is fleeting by.

In this there is much force, and the idea in the concluding quatrain is so well *put* as to have the air of originality. Indeed, I am not sure that the thought of the last two lines is not original;—at all events it is exceedingly *natural* and impressive. I say "*natural*," because, in any imagined ascent from the orb we inhabit, when heaven should "burst on the sight"—in other words, when the attraction of the planet should be superseded by that of another sphere, then instantly would the "earth" have the appearance of "fleeting by." The versification, also, is much better here than is usual with the poetess. In general she is rough, through excess of harsh consonants. The whole poem is of higher merit than any which I can find with her name attached; but there is little of the spirit of poesy in anything she writes. She evinces more feeling than ideality.

Her first decided success was with her comedy, "Fashion," although much of this success itself is referable to the interest felt in her as a beautiful woman and an authoress.

The play is not without merit. It may be commended especially for its simplicity of plot. What the Spanish playwrights mean by dramas of *intrigue*, are the worst acting dramas in the world; the intellect of an audience can never safely be fatigued by complexity. The necessity for verbose explanation, however, on the part of Trueman, at the close of the play, is in this regard a serious defect. A *dénouement* should in all cases be taken up with *action*—with nothing else. Whatever cannot be explained by such action should be communicated at the opening of the story.

In the plot, however estimable for simplicity, there is of course not a particle of originality of invention. Had it, indeed, been designed as a burlesque upon the arrant conventionality of stage incidents in general, it might have been received as a palpable hit. There is not an event, a character, a jest, which is not a well-understood thing, a matter of course, a stage-property time out of mind. The general tone is adopted from "The School for Scandal," to which, indeed, the whole composition bears just such an affinity as the shell of a locust to the locust that tenants it—as the spectrum of a Congreve rocket to the Congreve rocket itself. In the *management* of her imitation, nevertheless, Mrs. Mowatt has, I think, evinced a sense of theatrical effect or point which may lead her, at no very distant day, to compose an exceedingly *taking*, although it can never much aid her in composing a very meritorious drama. "Fashion," in a word, owes what it had of success to its being the work of a lovely woman who

had already excited interest, and to the very commonplaceness or spirit of conventionality which rendered it readily comprehensible and appreciable by the public proper. It was much indebted, too, to the carpets, the ottomans, the chandeliers and the conservatories, which gained so decided a popularity for that despicable mass of inanity, the "London Assurance" of Bourcicault.

Since "Fashion," Mrs. Mowatt has published one or two brief novels in pamphlet form, but they have no particular merit, although they afford glimpses (I cannot help thinking) of a genius as yet unrevealed, except in her capacity of actress.

In this capacity, if she be but true to herself, she will assuredly win a very enviable distinction. She has done well, wonderfully well, both in tragedy and comedy; but if she knew her own strength, she would confine herself nearly altogether to the depicting (in letters not less than on the stage) the more gentle sentiments and the most profound passions. Her sympathy with the latter is evidently intense. In the utterance of the truly generous, of the really noble, of the unaffectedly passionate, we see her bosom heave, her cheek grow pale, her limbs tremble, her lip quiver, and nature's own tear rush impetuously to the eye. It is this freshness of the heart which will provide for her the greenest laurels. It is this enthusiasm, this well of deep feeling, which should be made to prove for her an inexhaustible source of fame. As an actress, it is to her a mine of wealth worth all the dawdling *instruction* in the world. Mrs. Mowatt, on her first appearance as Pauline, was quite as able to give lessons in stage *routine* to any actor or actress in America, as was any actor or actress to give lessons to her. *Now*, at least, she should throw all "support" to the winds,

trust proudly to her own sense of art, her own rich and natural elocution, her beauty, which is unusual, her grace, which is queenly, and be assured that these qualities, as she *now* possesses them, are all sufficient to render her a great actress, when considered simply as the means by which the end of natural acting is to be attained, as the mere instruments by which she may effectively and unimpededly lay bare to the audience the movements of her own passionate heart.

Indeed, the great charm of her manner is its naturalness. She looks, speaks, and moves, with a well-controlled impulsiveness, as different as can be conceived from the custumary rant and cant, the hack conventionality of the stage. Her voice is rich and voluminous, and although by no means powerful, is so well managed as to seem so. Her utterance is singularly distinct, its sole blemish being an occasional Anglicism of accent, adopted probably from her instructor, Mr. Crisp. Her reading could scarcely be improved. Her action is distinguished by an ease and self-possession which would do credit to a veteran. Her step is the perfection of grace. Often have I watched her for hours with the closest scrutiny, yet never for an instant did I observe her in an attitude of the least awkwardness or even constraint, while many of her seemingly impulsive gestures spoke in loud terms of the woman of genius, of the poet imbued with the profoundest sentiment of the beautiful in motion.

Her figure is slight, even fragile. Her face is a remarkably fine one, and of that precise character best adapted to the stage. The forehead is, perhaps, the least prepossessing feature, although it is by no means an unintellectual one. Hair light auburn, in rich profusion, and always arranged with exquisite taste. The eyes are gray, brilliant and ex-

pressive, without being full. The nose is well formed, with the Roman curve, and indicative of energy. This quality is also shown in the somewhat excessive prominence of the chin. The mouth is large, with brilliant and even teeth and flexible lips, capable of the most instantaneous and effective variations of expression. A more radiantly beautiful smile it is quite impossible to conceive.

GEORGE B. CHEEVER

THE REVEREND GEORGE B. CHEEVER created at one time something of an excitement by the publication of a little *brochure* entitled "Deacon Giles' Distillery." He is much better known, however, as the editor of "The Commonplace Book of American Poetry," a work which has at least the merit of not belying its title, and *is* exceedingly commonplace. I am ashamed to say that for several years this compilation afforded to Europeans the only material from which it was possible to form an estimate of the poetical ability of Americans. The selections appear to me exceedingly injudicious, and have all a marked leaning to the didactic. Dr. Cheever is not without a certain sort of negative ability as critic, but works of this character should be undertaken by poets or not at all. The verses which I have seen attributed to *him* are undeniably *médiocres*.

His principal publications, in addition to those mentioned above, are "God's Hand in America," "Wanderings of a Pilgrim under the Shadow of Mont Blanc," "Wanderings of a Pilgrim under the Shadow of Jungfrau," and, lately, a "Defence of Capital Punishment." This "Defence" is at many points well reasoned, and as a clear *resumé* of all that has been already said on its own side of the question, may be considered as commendable. Its premises, however, (as well as those of all reasoners *pro* or *con* on this vexed topic), are admitted only very partially by the world at large--a fact of which

the author affects to be ignorant. Neither does he make the slightest attempt at bringing forward one novel argument. Any man of ordinary invention might have adduced and maintained a dozen.

The two series of "Wanderings" are, perhaps, the best works of their writer. They are what is called "eloquent"; a little too much in that way, perhaps, but nevertheless entertaining.

Dr. Cheever is rather small in stature, and his countenance is vivacious; in other respects, there is nothing very observable about his personal appearance. He has been recently married.

CHARLES ANTHON

DOCTOR CHARLES ANTHON is the well-known Jay-Professor of the Greek and Latin languages in Columbia College, New York and Rector of the Grammar School. If not absolutely the best he is at least generally considered the best classicist in America. In England, and in Europe at large, his scholastic acquirements are more sincerely respected than those of any of our countrymen. His additions to Lemprière are there justly regarded as evincing a nice perception of method, and accurate as well as extensive erudition, but his "Classical Dictionary" has superseded the work of the Frenchman altogether. Most of Professor Anthon's publications have been adopted as text-books at Oxford and Cambridge—an honor to be properly understood only by those acquainted with the many high requisites for attaining it. As a commentator (if not exactly as a critic) he may rank with any of his day, and has evinced powers very unusual in men who devote their lives to classical lore. His accuracy is very remarkable; in this particular he is always to be relied upon. The trait manifests itself even in his MS., which is a model of neatness and symmetry, exceeding in these respects anything of the kind with which I am acquainted. It is somewhat *too* neat, perhaps, and *too* regular, as well as diminutive, to be called beautiful; it might be mistaken at any time, however, for very elaborate copperplate engraving.

But his chirography, although fully in keeping,

so far as precision is concerned, with his mental character, is, in its entire freedom from flourish or superfluity, as much *out* of keeping with his verbal style. In his notes to the Classics he is singularly Ciceronian—if, indeed, not positively Johnsonese.

An attempt was made not long ago to prepossess the public against his "Classical Dictionary," the most important of his works, by getting up a hue and cry of plagiarism—in the case of all similar books the most preposterous accusation in the world, although, from its very preposterousness, one not easily rebutted. Obviously, the design in any such compilation is, in the first place, to make a *useful school-book* or book of reference, and the scholar who should be weak enough to neglect this indispensable point for the mere purpose of winning credit with a few bookish men for originality, would deserve to be dubbed, by the public at least, a dunce. There are very few points of classical scholarship which are not the common property of "the learned" throughout the world, and in composing any book of reference recourse is unscrupulously and even necessarily had in all cases to similar books which have preceded. In availing themselves of these latter, however, it is the practice of quacks to paraphrase page after page, rearranging the order of paragraphs, making a slight alteration in point of fact here and there, but preserving the spirit of the whole, its information, erudition, etc., etc., while everything is so completely *re-written* as to leave no room for a direct charge of plagiarism; and this is considered and lauded as originality. Now, he who, in availing himself of the labors of his predecessors (and it is clear that all scholars *must* avail themselves of such labors)—he who shall copy *verbatim* the passages to be desired, without attempt at palming off their spirit as

original with himself, is certainly no plagiarist, even if he fail to make *direct* acknowledgment of indebtedness—is unquestionably *less* of the plagiarist than the disingenuous and contemptible quack who wriggles himself, as above explained, into a reputation for originality, a reputation quite out of place in a case of this kind—the public, of course, never caring a straw whether he be original or not. These attacks upon the New York professor are to be attributed to a *clique* of pedants in and about Boston, gentlemen envious of his success, and whose own complications are noticeable only for the singular patience and ingenuity with which their dovetailing to chicanery is concealed from the *public* eye.

Doctor Anthon is, perhaps, forty-eight years of age; about five feet eight inches in height; rather stout; fair complexion; hair light and inclined to curl; forehead remarkably broad and high; eye gray, clear and penetrating; mouth well-formed, with excellent teeth—the lips having great flexibility, and consequent power of expression; the smile particularly pleasing. His address in general is bold, frank, cordial, full of *bonhommie*. His whole air is *distingué* in the best understanding of the term—that is to say, he would impress any one at first sight with the idea of his being no ordinary man. He has qualities, indeed, which would have insured him eminent success in almost any pursuit; and there are times in which his friends are half disposed to regret his exclusive devotion to classical literature. He was one of the originators of the late "New York Review," his associates in the conduct and proprietorship being Doctor F. L. Hawks and Professor R. C. Henry. By far the most valuable papers, however, were those of Doctor A.

RALPH HOYT

THE REVEREND RALPH HOYT is known chiefly—at least to the world of letters—by "The Chaunt of Life and other Poems, with Sketches and Essays." The publication of this work, however, was never *completed*, only a portion of the poems having appeared, and none of the essays or sketches. It is hoped that we shall yet have these latter.

Of the poems issued, one, entitled "Old," had so many peculiar excellences that I copied the whole of it, although quite long, in "The Broadway Journal." It will remind every reader of Durand's fine picture, "An Old Man's Recollections," although between poem and painting there is no more than a very admissible similarity.

I quote a stanza from "Old" (the opening one) by way of bringing the piece to the remembrance of any who may have forgotten it.

> By the wayside, on a mossy stone,
> Sat a hoary pilgrim sadly musing;
> Oft I marked him sitting there alone,
> All the landscape like a page perusing;
> Poor unknown,
> By the way side on a mossy stone.

The quaintness aimed at here is, so far as a single stanza is concerned, to be defended as a legitimate effect, conferring high pleasure on a numerous and cultivated class of minds. Mr. Hoyt, however, in his continuous and uniform repetition of the first line in the last of each stanza of twenty-five, has by much exceeded the proper limits of the quaint and

impinged upon the ludicrous. The poem, nevertheless, abounds in lofty merit, and has, in especial, some passages of rich imagination and exquisite pathos. For example—

> Seemed it pitiful he should sit there,
> No one sympathizing, no one heeding,
> *None to love him for his thin gray hair.*
>
> One sweet spirit broke the silent spell—
> Ah, to me her name was always Heaven!
> She besought him all his grief to tell—
> (I was then thirteen and she eleven)
> Isabel!
> One sweet spirit broke the silent spell.
>
> "Angel," said he, sadly, "I am old;
> Earthly hope no longer hath a morrow:
> Why I sit here thou shalt soon be told"—
> (Then his eye betrayed a pearl of sorrow—
> Down it rolled—)
> "Angel," said he, sadly, "*I am old!*"

It must be confessed that some portions of "Old" (which is by far the best of the collection) remind us forcibly of the "Old Man" of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

"Pröemus" is the concluding poem of the volume, and itself concludes with an exceedingly vigorous stanza, putting me not a little in mind of Campbell in his best days.

> "O'er all the silent sky
> A dark and scowling frown—
> But darker scowled each eye
> When all resolved to die—
> *When (night of dread renown!)*
> *A thousand stars went down.*"

Mr. Hoyt is about forty years of age, of the medium height, pale complexion, dark hair and eyes. His countenance expresses sensibility and benevolence. He converses slowly and with perfect deliberation. He is married.

GULIAN C. VERPLANCK

MR. VERPLANCK has acquired reputation—at least his literary reputation—less from what he has done than from what he has given indication of ability to do. His best if not his principal works, have been addresses, orations and contributions to the reviews. His scholarship is more than respectable, and his taste and acumen are not to be disputed.

His legal acquirements, it is admitted, are very considerable. When in Congress he was noted as the most industrious man in that assembly, and acted as a walking register or volume of reference, ever at the service of that class of legislators who are too lofty-minded to burden their memories with mere business particulars or matters of fact. Of late years the energy of his character appears to have abated, and many of his friends go so far as to accuse him of indolence.

His family is quite influential—one of the few old Dutch ones retaining their social position.

Mr. Verplanck is short in stature, not more than five feet five inches in height, and compactly or stoutly built. The head is square, massive, and covered with thick, bushy and grizzly hair; the cheeks are ruddy; lips red and full, indicating a relish for good cheer; nose short and straight; eyebrows much arched; eyes dark blue, with what seems, to a casual glance, a sleepy expression—but they gather light and fire as we examine them.

He must be sixty, but a vigorous constitution gives

promise of a ripe and healthful old age. He is active; walks firmly, with a short, quick step. His manner is affable, or (more accurately) sociable. He converses well, although with no great fluency, and has his hobbies of talk; is especially fond of old English literature. Altogether, his person, intellect, tastes and general peculiarities, bear a very striking resemblance to those of the late Nicholas Biddle.

FREEMAN HUNT

MR. HUNT is the editor and proprietor of the well-known "Merchants' Magazine," one of the most useful of our monthly journals, and decidedly the best "property" of any work of its class. In its establishment he evinced many remarkable traits of character. He was entirely without means, and even much in debt, and otherwise embarrassed, when by one of those intuitive perceptions which belong only to genius, but which are usually attributed to "good luck," the "happy" idea entered his head of getting up a magazine devoted to the interests of the influential class of merchants. The chief happiness of this idea, however, (which no doubt had been entertained and discarded by a hundred projectors before Mr. H.,) consisted in the method by which he proposed to carry it into operation. Neglecting the hackneyed modes of advertising largely, circulating flashy prospectuses and sending out numerous "agents," who in general, merely serve the purpose of boring people into a very temporary support of the work in whose behalf they are employed, he took the whole matter resolutely into his own hands; called personally, in the first place, upon his immediate mercantile friends; explained to them, frankly and succinctly, his object; put the value and necessity of the contemplated publication in the best light—as he well knew how to do—and in this manner obtained to head his subscription list a good many of the most eminent business men in New York. Armed with their names and with

recommendatory letters from many of them, he now pushed on to the other chief cities of the Union, and thus, in less time than is taken by ordinary men to make a preparatory flourish of trumpets, succeeded in building up for himself a permanent fortune and for the public a journal of immense interest and value. In the whole proceeding he evinced a tact, a knowledge of mankind and a self-dependence which are the staple of even greater achievements than the establishment of a five dollar magazine. In the subsequent conduct of the work he gave evidence of equal ability. Having without aid put the magazine upon a satisfactory footing as regards its circulation, he also without aid undertook its editorial and business conduct—from the first germ of the conception to the present moment having kept the whole undertaking within his own hands. His subscribers and regular contributors are now among the most intelligent and influential in America; the journal is regarded as absolute authority in mercantile matters, circulates extensively not only in this country but in Europe, and even in regions more remote, affording its worthy and enterprising projector a large income, which no one knows better than himself how to put to good use.

The strong points, the marked peculiarities of Mr. Hunt could not have failed in arresting the attention of all observers of character; and Mr. Willis in especial has made him the subject of repeated comment. I copy what follows from the "New York Mirror":

Hunt has been glorified in the "Hong-Kong Gazette," is regularly complimented by the English mercantile authorities, has every bank in the world for an eager subscriber, every consul, every ship-owner and navigator; is filed away as authority in every library, and thought of in half the countries of the world as early as No. 3 in their enumeration of distinguished Americans, yet who seeks

to do him honor in the city he does honor to? The "Merchants' Magazine," though a prodigy of perseverance and industry, is not an accidental development of Hunt's energies. He has always been singularly sagacious and original in devising new works and good ones. He was the founder of the first "Ladies' Magazine,"* of the first children's periodical; he started the "American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge," compiled the best known collection of American anecdotes and is an indefatigable writer—the author, among other things of "Letters About the Hudson."

Hunt was a playfellow of ours in round-jacket days, and we have always looked at him with a reminiscent interest. His luminous, eager eyes, as he goes along the street, keenly bent on his errand, would impress any observer with an idea of his genius and determination, and we think it quite time his earnest head was in the engraver's hand and his daily passing by a mark for the *digito monstrari*. Few more worthy or more valuable citizens are among us.

Much of Mr. Hunt's character is included in what I have already said and quoted. He is "earnest," "eager," combining in a very singular manner general coolness and occasional excitability. He is a true friend, and the enemy of no man. His heart is full of the warmest sympathies and charities. No one in New York is more universally popular.

He is about five feet eight inches in height, well proportioned; complexion dark-florid; forehead capacious; chin massive and projecting, indicative (according to Lavater and general experience) of that energy which is, in fact, the chief point of his character; hair light brown, very fine, of a weblike texture, worn long and floating about the face; eyes of wonderful brilliancy and intensity of expression; the whole countenance beaming with sensibility and intelligence. He is married, and about thirty-eight years of age.

*At this point Mr. Willis is, perhaps, in error.

PIERO MARONCELLI

DURING his twelve years' imprisonment, *Maroncelli* composed a number of poetical works, some of which were committed to paper, others lost for the want of it. In this country he has published a volume entitled "Additions of the Memoirs of Silvio Pellico," containing numerous anecdotes of the captivity not recorded in Pellico's work, and an "Essay on the Classic and Romantic Schools," the author proposing to divide them anew and designate them by novel distinctions. There is at least some scholarship and some originality in this essay. It is also brief. Maroncelli regards it as the best of his compositions. It is strongly tinctured with transcendentalism. The volume contains, likewise, some poems, of which the "Psalm of Life," and the "Psalm of the Dawn" have never been translated into English. "Winds of the Wakened Spring," one of the pieces included, has been happily rendered by Mr. Halleck, and is the most favorable specimen that could have been selected. These "Additions" accompanied a Boston version of "My Prisons, by Silvio Pellico."

Maroncelli is now about fifty years old, and bears on his person the marks of long suffering; he has lost a leg; his hair and beard became gray many years ago; just now he is suffering from severe illness, and from this it can scarcely be expected that he will recover.

In figure he is short and slight. His forehead is rather low, but broad. His eyes are light blue and

weak. The nose and mouth are large. His features in general have all the Italian mobility; their expression is animated and full of intelligence. He speaks hurriedly and gesticulates to excess. He is irritable, frank, generous, chivalrous, warmly attached to his friends, and expecting from them equal devotion. His love of country is unbounded, and he is quite enthusiastic in his endeavors to circulate in America the literature of Italy.

LAUGHTON OSBORN

PERSONALLY, Mr. Osborn is little known as an author, either to the public or in literary society, but he has made a great many "sensations" anonymously, or with a *nom de plume*. I am not sure that he has published anything with his own name.

One of his earliest works—if not his earliest—was "The Adventures of Jeremy Levis, by Himself," in one volume, a kind of medley of fact, fiction, satire, criticism, and novel philosophy. It is a dashing, reckless *brochure*, brimful of talent and audacity. Of course it was covertly admired by the few, and loudly condemned by all of the many who can fairly be said to have seen it at all. It had no great circulation. There was something wrong, I fancy, in the mode of its issue.

"Jeremy Levis" was followed by "The Dream of Alla-Ad-Deen, from the romance of 'Anastasia.' by Charles Erskine White, D. D." This is a thin pamphlet of thirty-two pages, each page containing about a hundred and forty words. Alla-Ad-Deen is the son of Aladin, of "wonderful lamp" memory, and the story is in the "Vision of Mirza," or "Rasselas" way. The design is to reconcile us to death and evil, on the somewhat unphilosophical ground that comparatively we are of little importance in the scale of creation. The author himself supposes this scale to be infinite, and thus his argument proves too much; for if evil should be regarded by man as of no consequence because, "comparatively," *he* is of

none, it must be regarded as of no consequence by the angels for a similar reason—and so on in an ever-ending ascent. In other words, the only thing proved is the rather bullish proposition that evil is no evil at all. I do not find that the "Dream" elicited any attention. It would have been more appropriately published in one of our magazines.

Next in order came, I believe, "The Confessions of a Poet, by Himself." This was in two volumes, of the ordinary novel form, but printed very openly. It made much noise in the literary world, and no little curiosity was excited in regard to its author, who was generally supposed to be John Neal. There were some grounds for this supposition, the tone and matter of the narrative bearing much resemblance to those of "Errata" and "Seventy-Six," especially in the points of boldness and vigor. The "Confessions," however, far surpassed any production of Mr. Neal's in a certain air of cultivation (if not exactly of scholarship) which pervaded it, as well as in the management of its construction—a particular in which the author of "The Battle of Niagara" invariably fails; there is no precision, no finish, about anything he does—always an excessive *force* but little of refined art. Mr. N. seems to be deficient, in a sense of *completeness*. He begins well, vigorously, startlingly, and proceeds by fits, quite at random, now prosing, now exciting vivid interest, but his conclusions are sure to be hurried and indistinct, so that the reader perceives a falling off, and closes the book with dissatisfaction. He has done nothing which, as a whole, is even respectable, and "The Confessions" are quite remarkable for their artistic unity and perfection. But in higher regards they are to be commended. I do not think, indeed, that a better book of its kind has been written

in America. To be sure, it is not precisely the work to place in the hands of a lady, but its scenes of passion are intensely wrought, its incidents are striking and original, its sentiments audacious and suggestive at least, if not at all times tenable. In a word, it is that rare thing, a fiction of *power* without rudeness. Its spirit, in general, resembles that of "Miserrimus" and "Martin Faber."

Partly on account of what most persons would term their licentiousness, partly, also, on account of the prevalent idea that Mr. Neal (who was never very popular with the press) had written them, "The Confessions," by the newspapers, were most unscrupulously misrepresented and abused. The "Commercial Advertiser" of New York, was, it appears, foremost in condemnation, and Mr. Osborn thought proper to avenge his wrongs by the publication of a bulky satirical poem, levelled at the critics in general, but more especially at Colonel Stone, the editor of the "Commercial." This satire (which was published in exquisite style as regards print and paper,) was entitled "The Vision of Rubeta." Owing to the high price necessarily set upon the book, no great many copies were sold, but the few that got into circulation made quite a hubbub, and with reason, for the satire was not only bitter but personal in the last degree. It was, moreover, very censurably indecent—*filthy* is, perhaps, the more appropriate word. The press, without exception, or nearly so, condemned it in loud terms, without taking the trouble to investigate its pretensions as a literary work. But as "The Confessions of a Poet" was *one* of the best novels of its kind ever written in this country, so "The Vision of Rubeta" was decidedly *the best* satire. For its vulgarity and gross personality there is no defence, but its mordacity

cannot be gainsaid. In calling it, however, the best American satire, I do not intend any excessive commendation—for it is, in fact, the *only* satire composed by an American. Trumbull's clumsy work is nothing at all, and then we have Halleck's "Crockers," which is very feeble—but what is there besides? "The Vision" is our best satire, and still a sadly deficient one. It was bold enough and bitter enough, and well constructed and decently versified, but it failed in *sarcasm* because its malignity was permitted to render itself evident. The author is never very severe because he is never sufficiently cool. We laugh not so much at the objects of his satire as we do at himself for getting into so great a passion. But, perhaps, under no circumstances is wit the *forte* of Mr. Osborn. He has few equals at downright invective.

The "Vision" was succeeded by "Arthur Carryl and other Poems," including an additional canto of the satire, and several happy although not in all cases accurate or comprehensive imitations in English of the Greek and Roman metres. "Arthur Carryl" is a fragment, in the manner of "Don Juan." I do not think it especially meritorious. It has, however, a truth-telling and discriminative preface, and its notes are well worthy perusal. Some opinions embraced in these latter on the topic of versification I have examined in one of the series of articles called "Marginalia."

I am not aware that since "Arthur Carryl" Mr. Osborn has written anything more than a "Treatise on Oil Painting," issued not long ago by Messrs. Wiley and Putnam. This work is highly spoken of by those well qualified to judge, but is, I believe, principally a compilation or compendium.

In personal character, Mr. O. is one of the most

remarkable men I ever yet had the pleasure of meeting. He is undoubtedly one of "Nature's own noblemen," full of generosity, courage, honor—chivalrous in every respect, but, unhappily, carrying his ideas of chivalry, or rather of independence, to the point of Quixotism, if not of absolute insanity. He has no doubt been misapprehended, and therefore wronged by the world; but he should not fail to remember that the source of the wrong lay in his own idiosyncrasy—one altogether unintelligible and unappreciable by the mass of mankind.

He is a member of one of the oldest and most influential, formerly one of the wealthiest families in New York. His acquirements and accomplishments are many and unusual. As poet, painter, and musician, he has succeeded nearly equally well, and absolutely succeeded as each. His scholarship is extensive. In the French and Italian languages, he is quite at home, and in everything he is thorough and accurate. His critical abilities are to be highly respected, although he is apt to swear somewhat too roundly by Johnson and Pope. Imagination is not Mr. Osborn's *forte*.

He is about thirty-two or three—certainly not more than thirty-five years of age. In person he is well made, probably five feet ten or eleven, muscular and active. Hair, eyes, and complexion, rather light; fine teeth; the whole expression of the countenance manly, frank, and prepossessing in the highest degree.

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK

THE name of Halleck is at least as well established in the poetical world as that of any American. Our principal poets are, perhaps, most frequently named in this order—Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Sprague, Longfellow, Willis, and so on—Halleck coming second in the series, but holding, in fact, a rank in the public opinion quite equal to that of Bryant. The accuracy of the arrangement as above made may, indeed, be questioned. For my own part, I should have it thus—Longfellow, Bryant, Halleck, Willis, Sprague, Dana; and, estimating rather the poetic capacity than the poems actually accomplished, there are three or four comparatively unknown writers whom I would place in the series between Bryant and Halleck, while there are about a dozen whom I should assign a position between Willis and Sprague. Two dozen at least might find room between Sprague and Dana—this latter, I fear, owing a very large portion of this reputation to his *quondam* editorial connexion with "The North American Review." One or two poets, now in my mind's eye, I should have no hesitation in posting above even Mr. Longfellow—still not intending this as very extravagant praise.

It is noticeable, however, that, in the arrangement which I attribute to the popular understanding, the order observed is nearly, if not exactly, that of the ages—the poetic ages—of the individual poets. Those rank first who were first known. The priority has established the strength of impression. Nor is this result to be accounted for by mere reference to the old saw—that first impressions are the strongest.

Gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyper-patriotic triumph have been blended, and finally confounded with admiration or appreciation in regard to the *pioneers* of American literature, among whom there is not one whose productions have not been grossly overrated by his countrymen. Hitherto we have been in no mood to view with ealmness and discuss with discrimination the real claims of the few who were *first* in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as at one period she half affected and wholly wished to believe. Is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and Mr. Paulding nearly all, of his reputation as a novelist to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither of these gentlemen *could* have written are written daily by native authors, without attracting much more of commendation than can be included in a newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this happens because there is no longer either reason or wit in the query, "Who reads an American book?"

I mean to say, of course, that Mr. Halleck, in the *apparent* public estimate, maintains a somewhat better position than that to which, on absolute grounds, he is entitled. There is something, too, in the *bonhommie* of certain of his compositions—something altogether distinct from poetic merit—which has aided to establish him; and much, also, must be admitted on the score of his personal popularity, which is deservedly great. With all these allowances, however, there will still be found a large amount of poetical fame to which he is *fairly* entitled.

He has written very little, although he began at an early age—when quite a boy, indeed. His

"juvenile" works, however, have been kept very judiciously from the public eye. Attention was first called to him by his satires, signed "Croaker" and "Croaker & Co.," published in "The New York Evening Post," in 1819. Of these the pieces with the signature "*Croaker & Co.*" were the joint work of Halleck and his friend Drake. The political and personal features of these *jeux d'esprit* gave them a consequence and a notoriety to which they are entitled on no other account. They are not without a species of drollery, but are loosely and no doubt carelessly written.

Neither was "Fanny," which closely followed the "Croakers," constructed with any great deliberation. "It was printed," say the ordinary memoirs, "within three weeks from its commencement"; but the truth is, that a couple of days would have been an ample allowance of time for any such composition. If we except a certain gentlemanly ease and *insouciance*, with some fancy of illustration, there is really very little about this poem to be admired. There has been no positive avowal of its authorship, although there can be no doubt of its having been written by Halleck. He, I presume, does not esteem it very highly. It is a mere extravaganza, in close imitation of "Don Juan"—a vehicle for squibs at cotemporary persons and things.

Our poet, indeed, seems to have been much impressed by "Don Juan," and attempts to engraft its farcicalities even upon the grace and delicacy of "Alnwick Castle," as, for example, in—

> Men in the coal and cattle line,
> From Teviot's bard and hero land,
> From royal Berwick's beach of sand,
> From Wooler, Morpeth, Hexham, *and*
> Newcastle upon Tyne.

These things may lay claim to oddity, but no more. They are totally out of keeping with the tone of the sweet poem into which they are thus clumsily introduced, and serve no other purpose than to deprive it of all unity of effect. If a poet *must* be farcical, let him be just that; he can be nothing better at the same moment. To be drolly sentimental, or even sentimentally droll, is intolerable to men and gods and columns.

"Alnwick Castle" is distinguished, in general, by that air of quiet grace, both in thought and expression, which is the prevailing feature of the muse of Halleck. Its second stanza is a good specimen of this manner. The commencement of the fourth belongs to a very high order of poetry.

> Wild roses by the Abbey towers
> Are gay in their young bed and bloom—
> *They were born of a race of funeral flowers*
> That garlanded, in long-gone hours,
> A Templar's knightly tomb.

This is gloriously imaginative, and the effect is singularly increased by the sudden transition from iambuses to anapæsts. The passage is, I think, the noblest to be found in Halleck, and I would be at a loss to discover its parallel in all American poetry.

"Marco Bozzaris" has much lyrical, without any great amount of *ideal* beauty. Force is its prevailing feature—force resulting rather from well-ordered metre, vigorous rhythm, and a judicious disposal of the circumstances of the poem, than from any of the truer lyric material. I should do my conscience great wrong were I to speak of "Marco Bozzaris" as it is the fashion to speak of it, at least in print. Even as a lyric or ode it is surpassed by

many American and a multitude of foreign compositions of a similar character.

"Burns" has numerous passages exemplifying its author's felicity of *expression;* as, for instance—

> Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines—
> Shrines to no code or creed confined—
> *The Delphian vales, the Palestines,*
> *The Meccas of the mind.*

And, again—

> There have been loftier themes than his,
> *And longer scrolls and louder lyres,*
> *And lays lit up with Poesy's*
> *Purer and holier fires.*

But to the *sentiment* involved in this last quatrain I feel disposed to yield an assent more thorough than might be expected. Burns, indeed, was the puppet of circumstance. As a poet, no person on the face of the earth has been more extravagantly, more absurdly overrated.

"The Poet's Daughter" is one of the most characteristic works of Halleck, abounding in his most distinctive traits, grace, expression, repose, *insouciance.* The vulgarity of

> I'm busy in the cotton trade
> And sugar line,

has, I rejoice to see, been omitted in the late editions. The eleventh stanza is certainly not English as it stands, and, besides, is quite unintelligible. What is the meaning of this—

> But her who asks, though first among
> The good, the beautiful, the young,
> The birthright of a spell more strong
> Than these have brought her.

The "Lines on the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake" is, as a whole, one of the best poems of its author. Its simplicity and delicacy of sentiment will recommend it to all readers. It is, however, carelessly written, and the first quatrain,

> Green be the turf above thee,
> Friend of my better days—
> None knew thee but to love thee,
> Nor named thee but to praise.

although beautiful, bears too close a resemblance to the still more beautiful lines of Wordsworth—

> She dwelt among the untrodden ways
> Beside the springs of Dove,
> A maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love.

In versification Mr. Halleck is much as usual, although in this regard Mr. Bryant has paid him numerous compliments. "Marco Bozzaris" has certainly some vigor of rhythm, but its author, in short, writes carelessly, loosely, and, as a matter of course, seldom effectively, so far as the outworks of literature are concerned.

Of late days he has nearly given up the muses, and we recognise his existence as a poet chiefly by occasional translations from the Spanish or German.

Personally, he is a man to be admired, respected, but more especially beloved. His address has all the captivating *bonhommie* which is the leading feature of his poetry, and, indeed, of his whole moral nature. With his friends he is all ardor, enthusiasm and cordiality, but to the world at large he is reserved, shunning society, into which he is seduced only with difficulty, and upon rare occasions. The love of solitude seems to have become with him a passion.

He is a good modern linguist, and an excellent *belles lettres* scholar; in general, has read a great deal, although very discursively. He is what the world calls *ultra* in most of his opinions, more particularly about literature and politics, and is fond of broaching and supporting paradoxes. He converses fluently, with animation and zeal; is choice and accurate in his language, exceedingly quick at repartee, and apt at anecdote. His manners are courteous, with dignity and a little tincture of Gallicism. His age is about fifty. In height he is probably five feet seven. He *has been* stout, but may now be called well-proportioned. His forehead is a noble one, broad, massive and intellectual, a little bald about the temples; eyes dark and brilliant, but not large; nose Grecian; chin prominent; mouth finely chiselled and full of expression, although the lips are thin;—his smile is peculiarly sweet.

In "Graham's Magazine" for September, 1843, there appeared an engraving of Mr. Halleck from a painting by Inman. The likeness conveys a good general idea of the man, but is far too stout and youthful-looking for his appearance at present.

His usual pursuits have been commercial, but he is now the principal superintendent of the business of Mr. John Jacob Astor. He is unmarried.

ANN S. STEPHENS

MRS. STEPHENS has made no collection of her works, but has written much for the magazines, and well. Her compositions have been brief tales with occasional poems. She made her first "sensation" in obtaining a preminum of four hundred dollars, offered for "the best prose story" by some one of our journals, her "Mary Derwent" proving the successful article. The *amount* of the prize, however—a much larger one than it has been the custom to offer—had more to do with the *éclât* of the success than had the positive merit of the tale, although this is very considerable. She has subsequently written several better things—"Malina Gray," for example, "Alice Copley," and "The Two Dukes." These are on serious subjects. In comic ones she has comparatively failed. She is fond of the bold, striking, trenchant—in a word, of the melo-dramatic; has a quick appreciation of the picturesque, and is not unskilful in delineations of character. She seizes adroitly on salient incidents and presents them with vividness to the eye, but in their combinations or adaptations she is by no means so thoroughly at home—that is to say, her plots are not so good as are their individual items. Her style is what the critics usually term "powerful," but lacks real power through its verboseness and floridity. It is, in fact, generally turgid—even bombastic—involved, needlessly parenthetical, and superabundant in epithets, although these latter are frequently well

chosen. Her sentences are, also, for the most part too long; we forget their commencements ere we get at their terminations. Her faults, nevertheless, both in matter and manner, belong to the effervescence of high talent, if not exactly of genius.

Of Mrs. Stephens' poetry I have seen so very little that I feel myself scarcely in condition to speak of it.

She began her literary life, I believe, by editing "The Portland Magazine," and has since been announced as editress of "The Ladies' Companion," a monthly journal published some years ago in New York, and also, at a later period, of "Graham's Magazine," and subsequently, again of "Peterson's National Magazine." These announcements were announcements and no more; the lady had nothing to do with the editorial control of either of the three last-named works.

The portrait of Mrs. Stephens which appeared in "Graham's Magazine" for November, 1844, cannot fairly be considered a likeness at all. She is tall and slightly inclined to *embonpoint*—an English figure. Her forehead is somewhat low, but broad; the features generally massive, but full of life and intellectuality. The eyes are blue and brilliant; the hair blonde and very luxuriant.

EVERT A. DUYCKINCK

MR. DUYCKINCK is one of the most influential of the New York *littérateurs*, and has done a great deal for the interests of American letters. Not the least important service rendered by him was the projection and editorship of Wiley and Putnam's "Library of Choice Reading," a series which brought to public notice many valuable foreign works which had been suffering under neglect in this country, and at the same time afforded unwonted encouragement to native authors by publishing their books, in good style and in good company, without trouble or risk to the authors themselves, and in the very teeth of the disadvantages arising from the want of an international copyright law. At one period it seemed that this happy scheme was to be overwhelmed by the competition of rival publishers—taken, in fact, quite out of the hands of those who, by "right of discovery," were entitled at least to its first fruits. A great variety of "Libraries," in imitation, were set on foot, but whatever may have been the temporary success of any of these latter, the original one had already too well established itself in the public favor to be overthrown, and thus has not been prevented from proving of great benefit to our literature at large.

Mr. Duyckinck has slyly acquired much fame and numerous admirers under the *nom de plume* of "Felix Merry." The various essays thus signed have attracted attention everywhere from the

judicious. The style is remarkable for its very unusual blending of purity and ease with a seemingly inconsistent originality, force and independence.

"Felix Merry," in connexion with Mr. Cornelius Matthews, was one of the editors and originators of "Arcturus," decidedly the very best magazine in many respects ever published in the United States. A large number of its most interesting papers were the work of Mr. D. The magazine was, upon the whole, a little *too good* to enjoy extensive popularity—although I am here using an equivocal phrase, for a *better* journal might have been far more acceptable to the public. I must be understood, then, as employing the epithet "good" in the sense of the literary quietists. The general taste of "Arcturus" was, I think, *excessively tasteful;* but this character applies rather more to its external or mechanical appearance than to its essential qualities. Unhappily, magazines and other similar publications, are, in the beginning, judged chiefly by externals. People saw "Arcturus" *looking* very much like other works which had failed through notorious dullness, although admitted as *arbitri elegantiarum* in all points of what is termed taste or decorum; and they, the people, had no patience to examine any farther. Cæsar's wife was required not only to *be* virtuous but to seem so, and in letters it is demanded not only that we be not stupid, but that we do not array ourselves in the habiliments of stupidity.

It cannot be said of "Arcturus" exactly that it wanted *force.* It was deficient in power of impression, and this deficiency is to be attributed mainly to the exceeding brevity of its articles—a brevity that degenerated into mere paragraphism, precluding dissertation or argument, and thus all

permanent effect. The magazine, in fact, had some of the worst or most inconvenient features without any of the compensating advantages of a weekly literary newspaper. The mannerism to which I refer seemed to have its source in undue admiration and consequent imitation of "The Spectator."

In addition to his more obvious literary engagements, Mr. Duyckinck writes a great deal, editorially and otherwise, for "The Democratic Review," "The Morning News," and other periodicals.

In character he is remarkable, distinguished for the *bonhommie* of his manner, his simplicity and single-mindedness, his active beneficence, his hatred of wrong done even to any enemy, and especially for an almost Quixotic fidelity to his friends. He seems in perpetual good humor with all things, and I have no doubt that in his secret heart he is an optimist.

In person he is equally simple as in character—the one is a *pendent* of the other. He is about five feet eight inches high, somewhat slender. The forehead, phrenologically, is a good one; eyes and hair light; the whole expression of the face that of serenity and benevolence, contributing to give an idea of youthfulness. He is probably thirty, but does not seem to be twenty-five. His dress, also, is in full keeping with his character, scrupulously neat but plain, and conveying an instantaneous conviction of the gentleman. He is a descendant of one of the oldest and best Dutch families in the state. Married.

MARY GOVE

MRS. MARY GOVE, under the pseudonym of "Mary Orme," has written many excellent papers for the magazines. Her subjects are usually tinctured with the mysticism of the transcendentalists, but are truly imaginative. Her style is quite remarkable for its luminousness and precision—two qualities very rare with her sex. An article entitled "The Gift of Prophecy," published originally in "The Broadway Journal," is a fine specimen of her manner.

Mrs. Gove, however, has acquired less notoriety by her literary compositions than by her lectures on physiology to classes of females. These lectures are said to have been instructive and useful; they certainly elicited much attention. Mrs. G. has also given public discourses on Mesmerism, I believe, and other similar themes—matters which put to the severest test the credulity, or, more properly, the faith of mankind. She is, I think, a Mesmerist, a Swedenborgian, a phrenologist, a homœopathist, and a disciple of Priessnitz—what more I am not prepared to say.

She is rather below the medium height, somewhat thin, with dark hair and keen, intelligent black eyes. She converses well and with enthusiasm. In many respects a very interesting woman.

JAMES ALDRICH

MR. ALDRICH has written much for the magazines, &c., and at one time assisted Mr. Park Benjamin in the conduct of "The New World." He also originated, I believe, and edited a not very long-lived or successful weekly paper, called "The Literary Gazette," an imitation in its external appearance of the London journal of the same name. I am not aware that he has made any collection of his writings. His poems abound in the true poetic spirit, but they are frequently chargeable with plagiarism, or something much like it. True, I have seen but three of Mr. Aldrich's compositions in verse—the three (or perhaps there are four of them,) included by Doctor Griswold in his "Poets and Poetry of America." Of these three, (or four,) however, there are two which I cannot help regarding as palpable plagiarisms. Of one of them, in especial, "*A* Death-Bed," it is impossible to say a plausible word in defence. Both in matter and manner it is nearly identical with a little piece entitled "*The* Death-Bed," by Thomas Hood.

The charge of plagiarism, nevertheless, is a purely literary one; and a plagiarism even distinctly proved by no means necessarily involves any moral delinquency. This proposition applies very especially to what appear to be *poetical* thefts. The poetic sentiment presupposes a keen appreciation of the beautiful with a longing for its assimilation into the poetic identity. What the poet intensely admires becomes, thus, in very fact, although only

partially, a portion of his own soul. Within this soul it has a secondary origination; and the poet, thus possessed by another's thought, cannot be said to take of it possession. But in either view he thoroughly feels it as *his own;* and the tendency to this feeling is counteracted only by the sensible presence of the true, palpable origin of the thought in the volume whence he has derived it—an origin which, in the long lapse of years, it is impossible *not* to forget, should the thought itself, as it often is, be forgotten. But the frailest association will regenerate it: it springs up with all the vigor of a new birth; its absolute originality is not with the poet a matter even of suspicion; and when he has written it and printed it, and on its account is charged with plagiarism, there will be no one more entirely astounded than himself. Now, from what I have said, it appears that the liability to accidents of this character is in the direct ratio of the poetic sentiment, of the susceptibility to the poetic impression; and, in fact, all literary history demonstrates that, for the most frequent and palpable plagiarisms we must search the works of the most eminent poets.

Since penning the above I have found five quatrains by Mr. Aldrich, with the heading "Molly Gray." These verses are in the fullest exemplification of what I have just said of their author, evincing at once, in the most remarkable manner, both his merit as an imaginative poet and his unconquerable proneness to imitation. I quote the two concluding quatrains.

> Pretty, fairy Molly Gray!
> What may thy fit emblems be?
> Stream or star or bird or flower—
> They are all too poor for thee.

No type to match thy beauty
My wandering fancy brings—
Not fairer than its chrysalis
Thy soul with its golden wings!

Here the "Pretty, fairy Molly Gray!" will put every reader in mind of Tennyson's "Airy, fairy Lillian!" by which Mr. Aldrich's whole poem has been clearly suggested; but the thought in the *finale* is, as far as I know anything about it, original, and is not more happy than happily expressed.

Mr. Aldrich is about thirty-six years of age. In regard to his person there is nothing to be especially noted.

HENRY CARY

DOCTOR GRISWOLD introduces Mr. Cary to the appendix of "The Poet and Poetry," as Mr. Henry Carey, and gives him credit for an Anacreontic song of much merit entitled, or commencing, "Old Wine to Drink." This was *not* written by Mr. C. He has composed little verse, if any, but, under the *nom de plume* of "John Waters," has acquired some note by a series of prose essays in "The New York American," and "The Knickerbocker." These essays have merit, unquestionably, but some person, in an article furnished "The Broadway Journal," before my assumption of its editorship, has gone to the extreme of toadyism in their praise. This critic (possibly Mr. Briggs) thinks that John Waters "is in some sort a Sam Rogers"—"resembles Lamb in fastidiousness of taste" —"has a finer artistic taste than the author of the 'Sketch Book'"—that his "sentences are the most perfect in the language—too perfect to be peculiar"—that "it would be a vain task to hunt through them all for a superfluous conjunction," and that "we need them (the works of John Waters!) as models of style in these days of rhodomontades and *Macaulayisms!*"

The truth seems to be that Mr. Cary is a vivacious, fanciful, entertaining essayist—a fifth or sixth rate one—with a style that, as times go—in view of such stylists as Mr. Briggs, for example—may be termed respectable, and no more. What the critic of the B. J. wishes us to understand by a style that

is "too perfect," "the most perfect," etc., it is scarcely worth while to inquire, since it is generally supposed that "perfect" admits of no degrees of comparison; but if Mr. Briggs (or whoever it is) finds it "a vain task to hunt" through all Mr. John Waters' works "for a superfluous conjunction," there are few schoolboys who would not prove more successful hunters than Mr. Briggs.

"It was well filled," says the essayist, on the very page containing these encomiums, *and* yet the number of performers," etc. "We paid our visit to the incomparable ruins of the castle, *and* then proceeded to retrace our steps, and, examine our wheels at every post-house, reached," etc. "After consultation with a mechanic at Heildelberg, *and* finding that," etc. The last sentence should read, "Finding, after consultation," etc.—the "and" would thus be avoided. Those in the two sentences first quoted are obviously pleonastic. Mr. Cary, in fact, abounds *very especially* in superfluities—(as here, for example, "He seated himself at a piano *that was* near the front of the stage")—and, to speak the truth, is continually guilty of all kinds of grammatical improprieties. I repeat that, in this respect, he is decent, and no more.

Mr. Cary is what Doctor Griswold calls a "gentleman of elegant leisure." He is wealthy and much addicted to letters and *virtû*. For a long time he was President of the Phœnix Bank of New York, and the principal part of his life has been devoted to business. There is nothing remarkable about his personable appearance.

CHRISTOPHER PEASE CRANCH

THE REVEREND C. P. CRANCH is one of the least intolerable of the school of Boston transcendentalists—and, in fact, I believe that he has at last "come out from among them," abandoned their doctrines (whatever they are) and given up their company in disgust. He was at one time one of the most noted, and undoubtedly one of the least absurd contributors to "The Dial," but has reformed his habits of thought and speech, domiciliated himself in New York, and set up the easel of an artist in one of the Gothic chambers of the University.

About two years ago a volume of "Poems by Christopher Pease Cranch" was published by Carey and Hart. It was most unmercifully treated by the critics, and much injustice, in my opinion, was done to the poet. He seems to me to possess unusual vivacity of fancy and dexterity of expression, while his versification is remarkable for its accuracy, vigor, and even for its originality of effect. I might say, perhaps, rather more than all this, and maintain that he has imagination if he would only condescend to employ it, which he will not, or *would* not until lately—the word-compounders and quibble concoctors of Frogpondium having inoculated him with a preference for Imagination's half sister, the Cinderella Fancy. Mr. Cranch has seldom contented himself with harmonious combinations of thought. There must always be, to afford him perfect satisfaction, a certain amount of the odd, of the whimsical, of the affected, of the *bizarre*. He is full of absurd conceits as Cowley or Donne, with this dif-

ference, that the conceits of these latter are Euphuisms beyond redemption—flat, irremediable, self-contented nonsensicalities, and in so much are good of their kind; but the conceits of Mr. Cranch are, for the most part, conceits intentionally manufactured, for conceit's sake, out of the material for properly imaginative, harmonious, proportionate, or poetical ideas. We see every moment that he has been at uncommon *pains* to make a fool of himself.

But perhaps I am wrong in supposing that I am at all in condition to decide on the merits of Mr. C.'s poetry, which is professedly addressed to the few. "Him we will seek," says the poet—

> Him we will seek, and none but him,
> Whose inward sense hath not grown dim;
> Whose soul is steeped in Nature's tinct
> And to the Universal linked;
> Who loves the beauteous Infinite
> With deep and ever new delight,
> And carrieth where'er he goes
> The inborn sweetness of the rose,
> The perfume as of Paradise—
> The talisman above all price—
> The optic glass that wins from far
> The meaning of the utmost star—
> The key that opes the golden doors
> Where earth and heaven have piled their stores—
> The magic ring, the enchanter's wand—
> The title-deed to Wonder-Land—
> The wisdom that o'erlooketh sense,
> The clairvoyance of Innocence.

This is all very well, fanciful, pretty, and neatly turned—all with the exception of the last two lines, and it is a pity they were not left out. It is laughable to see that the transcendental poets, if beguiled for a minute or two into respectable English and common sense, are always sure to remember their cue just as they get to the end of their song, which,

by way of *salvo*, they then round off with a bit of doggerel about "wisdom that o'erlook*eth* sense" and "the clairvoyance of Innocence." It is especially observable that, in adopting the cant of thought, the cant of phraseology is adopted at the same instant. Can Mr. Cranch, or can anybody else, inform me why it is that, in the really sensible opening passages of what I have here quoted, he employs the modern, and only in the final couplet of goose-therumfoodle makes use of the obsolete terminations of verbs in the third person singular, present tense?

One of the best of Mr. Cranch's compositions is undoubtedly his poem on *Niagara*. It has some natural thoughts, and grand ones, suiting the subject; but then they are more than half-divested of their nature by the attempt at adorning them with *oddity* of expression. *Quaintness* is an admissible and important adjunct to ideality—an adjunct whose value has been long misapprehended—but in picturing the sublime it is altogether out of place. What idea of power, of grandeur, for example, can any human being connect even with Niagara, when Niagara is described in language so trippingly fantastical, so palpably adapted to a purpose, as that which follows?

I stood upon a speck of ground;
Before me fell a stormy ocean.
I was like a captive bound;
And around
A universe of sound
Troubled the heavens with ever-quivering motion.

Down, down forever—down, down forever—
Something falling, falling, falling;
Up, up forever—up, up forever,
Resting never,
Boiling up forever,
Steam-clouds shot up with thunder-bursts appalling.

It is difficult to conceive anything more ludicrously out of keeping than the thoughts of these stanzas and the *petit-maître*, fidgety, hop-skip-and-jump air of the words and the Liliputian parts of the versification.

A somewhat similar metre is adopted by Mr. C. in his "Lines on Hearing Triumphant Music," but as the subject is essentially different, so the effect is by no means so displeasing. I copy one of the stanzas as the noblest individual passage which I can find among all the poems of its author.

> That glorious strain!
> Oh, from my brain
> *I see the shadow flitting like scared ghosts.*
> *A light—a light*
> *Shines in to-night*
> *Round the good angels trooping to their posts,*
> *And the black cloud is rent in twain*
> *Before the ascending strain.*

Mr. Cranch is well educated, and quite accomplished. Like Mr. Osborn, he is musician, painter, and poet, being in each capacity very respectably successful.

He is about thirty-three or four years of age; in height, perhaps five feet eleven; athletic; front face not unhandsome—the forehead evincing intellect, and the smile pleasant; but the profile is marred by the turning up of the nose, and, altogether is hard and disagreeable. His eyes and hair are dark brown—the latter worn short, slightly inclined to curl. Thick whiskers meeting under the chin, and much out of keeping with the shirtcollar *à la Byron.* Dresses with marked plainness. He is married

SARAH MARGARET FULLER

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SARAH MARGARET FULLER

MISS FULLER was at one time editor, or one of the editors of "The Dial," to which she contributed many of the most forcible and certainly some of the most peculiar papers. She is known, too, by "Summer on the Lakes," a remarkable assemblage of sketches, issued in 1844, by Little & Brown, of Boston. More lately she has published "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," a work which has occasioned much discussion, having had the good fortune to be warmly abused and chivalrously defended. At present, she is assistant editor of "The New York Tribune," or rather a salaried contributor to that journal, for which she has furnished a great variety of matter, chiefly notices of new books, etc., etc., her articles being designated by an asterisk. Two of the best of them were a review of Professor Longfellow's late magnificent edition of his own works, (with a portrait,) and an appeal to the public in behalf of her friend Harro Harring. The review did her infinite credit; it was frank, candid, independent—in even ludicrous contrast to the usual mere glorifications of the day, giving honor *only* where honor was due, yet evincing the most thorough capacity to appreciate and the most sincere intention to place in the fairest light the real and idiosyncratic merits of the poet.

In my opinion it is one of the very few reviews of Longfellow's poems, ever published in America, of which the critics have not had abundant reason

to be ashamed. Mr. Longfellow is entitled to a certain and very distinguished rank among the poets of his country, but that country is disgraced by the evident toadyism which would award to his social position and influence, to his fine paper and large type, to his morocco binding and gilt edges, to his flattering portrait of himself, and to the illustrations of his poems by Huntingdon, that amount of indiscriminate approbation which neither could nor would have been given to the poems themselves.

The defence of Harro Harring, or rather the Philipic against those who were doing him wrong, was one of the most eloquent and well-*put* articles I have ever yet seen in a newspaper.

"Woman in the Nineteenth Century" is a book which few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller. In the way of independence, of unmitigated radicalism, it is one of the "Curiosities of American Literature," and Doctor Griswold should include it in his book. I need scarcely say that the essay is nervous, forcible, thoughtful, suggestive, brilliant, and to a certain extent scholar-like—for all that Miss Fuller produces is entitled to these epithets—but I must say that the conclusions reached are only in part my own. Not that they are too bold, by any means—too novel, too startling, or too dangerous in their consequences, but that in their attainment too many premises have been distorted, and too many analogical inferences left altogether out of sight. I mean to say that the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences—an intention which can be distinctly comprehended only by throwing the exterior (more sensitive) portions of the mental

retina *casually* over the wide field of universal *analogy*—I mean to say that this *intention* has not been sufficiently considered. Miss Fuller has erred, too, through her own excessive objectiveness. She judges *woman* by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozen Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth. Holding these opinions in regard to "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," I still feel myself called upon to disavow the silly, condemnatory criticism of the work which appeared in one of the earlier numbers of "The Broadway Journal." That article was *not* written by myself, and *was* written by my associate, Mr. Briggs.

The most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius (for high genius she unquestionably possesses) is to be obtained, perhaps, from her contributions to "The Dial," and from her "Summer on the Lakes." Many of the *descriptions* in this volume are unrivalled for *graphicality*, (why is there not such a word?) for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject. This faculty, too, springs from her subjectiveness, which leads her to paint a scene less by its features than by its effects.

Here, for example, is a portion of her account of Niagara:—

> Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got at last a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it *so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence.* The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. *I felt that no*

other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe. I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force, with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, *images, such as had never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks.* Again and again this illusion recurred, and even *after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.* What I liked best was to sit on Table Rock close to the great fall; *there all power of observing details, all separate consciousness was quite lost.*

The truthfulness of the passages italicized will be felt by all; the feelings described are, perhaps, experienced by every (imaginative) person who visits the fall; but most persons, through predominant subjectiveness, would scarcely be conscious of the feelings, or, at best, would never think of employing them in an attempt to convey to others an impression of the scene. Hence so many desperate failures to convey it on the part of ordinary tourists. Mr. William W. Lord, to be sure, in his poem "Niagara," is sufficiently objective; he describes not the fall, but very properly the effect of the fall upon *him.* He says that it made him think of his *own* greatness, of his *own* superiority, and so forth, and so forth; and it is only when we come to think that the thought of Mr. Lord's greatness is quite idiosyncratic, confined exclusively to Mr. Lord, that we are in condition to understand how, in despite of his objectiveness, he has failed to convey an idea of anything beyond one Mr. William W. Lord.

From the essay entitled "Philip Van Artevelde," I copy a paragraph which will serve at once to exemplify Miss Fuller's more earnest (declamatory) style, and to show the tenor of her prospective speculations:—

At Chicago I read again "Philip Van Artevelde," and certain passages in it will always be in my mind associated with the deep sound of the lake, as heard in the night. I used to read a short time at night, and then open the blind to look out. The moon would be full upon the lake, and the calm breath, pure light, and the deep voice, harmonized well with the thought of the Flemish hero. When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs—no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous in the use of human instruments. A man, religious, virtuous, and—sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle or fleeting shadow, but a great, solemn game, to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who lives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moderately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad to-day by the gift which discerns to-morrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed.

From what I have quoted a *general* conception of the prose style of the authoress may be gathered. Her manner, however, is infinitely varied. It is always forcible—but I am not sure that it is always anything else, unless I say picturesque. It rather indicates than evinces scholarship. Perhaps only the scholastic, or, more properly, those accustomed to look narrowly at the structure of phrases, would be willing to acquit her of ignorance of grammar—would be willing to attribute her slovenliness to disregard of the shell in anxiety for the kernel; or to waywardness, or to affectation, or to blind reverence for Carlyle—would be able to detect, in her

strange and continual inaccuracies, a capacity for the accurate.

"I cannot sympathize with such an apprehension; the spectacle is *capable to* swallow *up* all such objects."

"It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is *like* to rise suddenly to light."

"I took our *mutual* friends to see her."

"It was always obvious that they had nothing in common *between them*."

"The Indian cannot be looked at truly *except* by a poetic eye."

"McKenney's Tour to the Lakes gives some facts not to be met *with* elsewhere."

"There is that mixture of culture and rudeness in the aspect of things *as* gives a feeling of freedom," etc., etc., etc.

These are merely a few, a very few instances, taken at random from among a multitude of *wilful* murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk. She uses, too, the word "ignore," a vulgarity adopted only of late days (and to no good purpose, since there is no necessity for it) from the barbarisms of the law, and makes no scruple of giving the Yankee interpretation to the verbs "witness" and "realize," to say nothing of "use," as in the sentence, "I used to read a short time at night." It will not do to say, in defence of such words, that in such senses they may be found in certain dictionaries—in that of Bolles', for instance;—*some* kind of "authority" may be found for *any* kind of vulgarity under the sun.

In spite of these things, however, and of her frequent unjustifiable Carlyleisms, (such as that of writing sentences which are no sentences, since, to be parsed, reference must be had to sentences preceding,) the style of Miss Fuller is one of the very best with which I am acquainted. In general effect,

I know no style which surpasses it. It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous—leaving details out of sight, it is everything that a style need be.

I believe that Miss Fuller has written much poetry, although she has published little. That little is tainted with the affectation of the *transcendentalists*, (I used this term, of course, in the sense which the public of late days seems resolved to give it,) but is brimful of the poetic *sentiment*. Here, for example, is something in Coleridge's manner, of which the author of "Genevieve" might have had no reason to be ashamed:—

A maiden sat beneath a tree;
Tear-bedewed her pale cheeks be,
And she sighed heavily.

From forth the wood into the *light*
A hunter strides with carol *light*,
And a glance so bold and bright.

He careless stopped and eyed the maid:
"Why weepest thou?" he gently said;
"I love thee well, be not afraid."

He takes her hand and leads her on—
She should have waited there alone,
For he was not her chosen one.

He *leans* her head upon his breast—
She knew 'twas not her home of rest,
But, ah, she had been sore distrest.

The sacred stars looked sadly down;
The parting moon appeared to frown,
To see thus dimmed the diamond crown.

Then from the thicket starts a deer—
The huntsman, seizing *on* his spear
Cries, "Maiden, wait thou for me here."

She sees him vanish into night—
She starts from sleep in deep affright,
For it was not her own true knight.

Though but in dream Gunhilda failed—
Though but a fancied ill assailed—
Though she but fancied fault bewailed—

Yet thought of day makes dream of night;
She is not worthy of the knight;
The inmost altar burns not bright.

If loneliness thou canst not bear—
Cannot the dragon's venom dare—
Of the pure meed thou shouldst despair.

Now sadder that lone maiden sighs;
Far bitterer tears profane her eyes;
Crushed in the dust her heart's flower lies.

To show the evident carelessness with which this poem was constructed, I have italicized an identical rhyme (of about the same force in versification as an identical proposition in logic) and two grammatical improprieties. *To lean* is a neuter verb, and "seizing *on*" is not properly to be called a pleonasm, merely because it is—nothing at all. The concluding line is difficult of pronunciation through excess of consonants. I should have preferred, indeed, the antepenultimate tristich as the *finale* of the poem.

The supposition that the book of an author is a thing apart from the author's self, is, I think, ill-founded. The soul is a cipher, in the sense of a cryptograph; and the shorter a cryptograph is, the more difficulty there is in its comprehension—at a certain point of brevity it would bid defiance to an army of Champollions. And thus he who has written very little, may in that little either conceal his spirit or convey quite an erroneous idea of it—

of his acquirements, talents, temper, manner, tenor and depth (or shallowness) of thought—in a word, of his character, of himself. But this is impossible with him who has written much. Of such a person we get, from his books, not merely a just, but the most just representation. Bulwer, the individual, personal man, in a green velvet waistcoat and amber gloves, is not by any means the veritable Sir Edward Lytton, who is discoverable only in "Ernest Maltravers," where his soul is deliberately and nakedly set forth. And who would ever know Dickens by looking at him or talking with him, or doing anything with him except reading his "Curiosity Shop"? What poet, in especial, but must feel at least the better portion of himself more fairly represented in even his commonest sonnet, (earnestly written,) than in his most elaborate or most intimate personalities?

I put all this as a general proposition, to which Miss Fuller affords a marked exception—to this extent, that her personal character and her printed book are merely one and the same thing. We get access to her soul *as* directly from the one as from the other—no *more* readily from this than from that—easily from either. Her acts are bookish, and her books are less thoughts than acts. Her literary and her conversational manner are identical. Here is a passage from her "Summer on the Lakes":—

> The rapids enchanted me far beyond what I expected; they are so swift that they cease to *seem* so—you can think only of their beauty. The fountain beyond the Moss islands I discovered for myself, and thought it for some time an *accidental* beauty which it would not do to *leave*, lest I might never see it again. After I found it *permanent*, I returned many times to watch the play of its crest. In the little waterfall beyond, Nature seems, as she often does, to have made a *study* for some larger design. She delights

in this—a sketch within a sketch—a dream within *a dream*. Wherever we see it, the lines of the great buttress in the fragment of stone, the hues of the waterfall, copied in the flowers that *star* its bordering mosses, we are *delighted*; for all the lineaments become *fluent*, and we mould the scene in congenial thought with its *genius*.

Now all this is precisely as Miss Fuller would *speak* it. She is perpetually saying just such things in just such words. To get the *conversational* woman in the mind's eye, all that is needed is to imagine her reciting the paragraph just quoted: but first let us have the *personal* woman. She is of the medium height; nothing remarkable about the figure; a profusion of lustrous light hair; eyes a bluish gray, full of fire; capacious forehead; the mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for love—when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer. Imagine, now, a person of this description looking you at one moment earnestly in the face, at the next seeming to look only within her own spirit or at the wall; moving nervously every now and then in her chair; speaking in a high key, but musically, deliberately, (not hurriedly or loudly,) with a delicious distinctness of enunciation—speaking, I say, the paragraph in question, and emphasizing the words which I have italicized, not by impulsion of the breath, (as is usual,) but by drawing them out as long as possible, nearly closing her eyes the while—imagine all this, and we have both the woman and the authoress before us.

JAMES LAWSON

MR. LAWSON has published, I believe, only "Giordano," a tragedy, and two volumes entitled "Tales and Sketches by a Cosmopolite." The former was condemned (to use a gentle word) some years ago at the Park Theatre; and never was condemnation more religiously deserved. The latter are in so much more tolerable than the former, that they contain one non-execrable thing—"The Dapper Gentleman's Story"—in manner, as in title, an imitation of one of Irving's "Tales of a Traveller."

I mention Mr. L., however, not on account of his literary labors, but because, although a Scotchman, he has always professed to have greatly at heart the welfare of American letters. He is much in the society of authors and booksellers, converses fluently, tells a good story, is of social habits, and, with no taste whatever, is quite enthusiastic on all topics appertaining to Taste.

CAROLINE M. KIRKLAND

MRS. KIRKLAND'S "New Home," published under the *nom de plume* of "Mary Clavers," wrought an undoubted sensation. The cause lay not so much in picturesque description, in racy humor, or in animated individual portraiture, as in *truth* and novelty. The west at the time was a field comparatively untrodden by the sketcher or the novelist. In certain works, to be sure, we had obtained brief glimpses of character strange to us sojourners in the civilized east, but to Mrs. Kirkland alone we were indebted for our acquaintance with the *home* and home-life of the backwoodsman. With a fidelity and vigor that prove her pictures to be taken from the very life, she has represented "scenes" that could have occurred only *as* and *where* she has described them. She has placed before us the veritable settlers of the forest, with all their peculiarities, national and individual; their free and fearless spirit; their homely utilitarian views; their shrewd out-looking for self-interest; their thrifty care and inventions multiform; their coarseness of manner, united with real delicacy and substantial kindness when their sympathies are called into action—in a word, with all the characteristics of the Yankee, in a region where the salient points of character are unsmoothed by contact with society. So lifelike were her representations that they have been appropriated as individual portraits by many who have been disposed to plead, trumpet-tongued, against what they

supposed to be "the deep damnation of their taking-off."

"Forest Life" succeeded "A New Home," and was read with equal interest. It gives us, perhaps, more of the philosophy of western life, but has the same freshness, freedom, piquancy. Of course, a truthful picture of pioneer habits could never be given in any grave history or essay so well as in the form of narration, where each character is permitted to develop itself; narration, therefore, was very properly adopted by Mrs. Kirkland in both the books just mentioned, and even more entirely in her later volume, "Western Clearings." This is the title of a collection of tales, illustrative, in general, of Western manners, customs, ideas. "The Land Fever" is a story of the wild days when the madness of speculation in land was at its height. It is a richly characteristic sketch, as is also "The Ball at Thram's Huddle." Only those who have had the fortune to visit or live in the "back settlements" can enjoy such pictures to the full. "Chances and Changes" and "Love *vs.* Aristocracy" are more regularly constructed *tales*, with the "universal passion" as the moving power, but colored with the glowing hues of the west. "The Bee Tree" exhibits a striking but too numerous class among the settlers, and explains, also, the depth of the bitterness that grows out of an unprosperous condition in that "Paradise of the Poor." "Ambuscades" and "Half-Lengths from Life," I remember as two piquant sketches to which an annual, a year or two ago, was indebted for a most unusual sale among the conscious and pen-dreading denizens of the west. "Half-Lengths" turns on the trying subject of *caste*. "The Schoolmaster's Progress" is full of truth and humor. The western pedagogue, the stiff, solitary

nondescript figure in the drama of a new settlement, occupying a middle position between "our folks" and "company," and "boarding round," is irresistibly amusing, and cannot fail to be recognised as the representative of a class. The occupation, indeed, always seems to mould those engaged in it—they all soon, like Master Horner, learn to "know well what belongs to the pedagogical character, and that facial solemnity stands high on the list of indispensable qualifications." The spelling-school, also, is a "new country" feature which we owe Mrs. Kirkland many thanks for recording. The incidents of "An Embroidered Fact" are singular and picturesque, but not particularly illustrative of the "Clearings." The same may be said of "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds"; but this abounds in capital touches of character: all the horrors of the tale are brought about through suspicion of *pride*, an accusation as destructive at the west as that of witchcraft in olden times, or the cry of mad dog in modern.

In the way of absolute *books*, Mrs. Kirkland, I believe, has achieved nothing beyond the three volumes specified, (with another lately issued by Wiley and Putnam,) but she is a very constant contributor to the magazines. Unquestionably, she is one of our best writers, has a province of her own, and in that province has few equals. Her most noticeable trait is a certain *freshness* of style, seemingly drawn, as her subjects in general, from the west. In the second place is to be observed a species of *wit*, approximating humor, and so interspersed with pure *fun*, that "wit," after all, is nothing like a definition of it. To give an example—"Old Thoughts on the New Year" commences with a quotation from Tasso's "Aminta:"—

Il mondo invecchia
E invecchiando intristisce;

and the following is given as a "free translation":—

The world is growing older
And wiser day by day;
Everybody knows beforehand
What you're going to say.
We used to laugh and frolic—
Now we must behave:
Poor old Fun is dead and buried—
Pride dug his grave.

This, if I am not mistaken, is the only specimen of *poetry* as yet given by Mrs. Kirkland to the world. She has afforded us no means of judging in respect to her inventive powers, although fancy, and even imagination, are apparent in everything she does. Her perceptive faculties enable her to *describe* with great verisimilitude. Her mere style is admirable, lucid, terse, full of variety, faultlessly pure, and yet bold—so bold as to appear heedless of the ordinary *decora* of composition. In even her most reckless sentences, however, she betrays the woman of refinement, of accomplishment, of unusually thorough education. There are a great many points in which her general manner resembles that of Willis, whom she evidently admires. Indeed, it would not be difficult to pick out from her works an occasional Willisism, not less palpable than happy. For example—

Peaches were like little green velvet buttons when George was first mistaken for Doctor Beaseley, and *before they were ripe* he, &c.

And again—

Mr. Hammond is fortunately settled in our neighborhood, for the present at least; and he has the neatest little cottage in the world, standing, too, under a very tall oak, which

bends kindly over it, looking like the Princess Glumdalclitch inclining her ear to the box which contained her pet Gulliver.

Mrs. Kirkland's personal manner is an echo of her literary one. She is frank, cordial, yet sufficiently dignified—even bold, yet especially ladylike; converses with remarkable accuracy as well as fluency; is brilliantly witty, and now and then not a little sarcastic, but a general amiability prevails.

She is rather above the medium height; eyes and hair dark; features somewhat small, with no marked characteristics, but the whole countenance beams with benevolence and intellect.

PROSPER M. WETMORE

GENERAL WETMORE occupied some years ago quite a conspicuous position among the *littérateurs* of New York city. His name was seen very frequently in "The Mirror," and in other similar journals, in connexion with brief poems and occasional prose compositions. His only publication in volume form, I believe, is "The Battle of Lexington and other Poems," a collection of considerable merit, and one which met a very cordial reception from the press.

Much of this cordiality, however, is attributable to the personal popularity of the man, to his facility in making acquaintances, and his tact in converting them into unwavering friends.

General Wetmore has an exhaustless fund of *vitality*. His energy, activity and indefatigability are proverbial, not less than his peculiar sociability. These qualities give him unusual influence among his fellow-citizens, and have constituted him (as precisely the same traits have constituted his friend General Morris,) one of a standing committee for the regulation of a certain class of city affairs—such, for instance, as the getting up a complimentary benefit, or a public demonstration of respect for some deceased worthy, or a ball and dinner to Mr. Irving or Mr. Dickens.

Mr. Wetmore is not only a General, but Naval Officer of the Port of New York, Member of the Board of Trade, one of the Council of the Art Union, one of the Corresponding Committee of the Histori-

cal Society, and of more other committees than I can just now remember. His manners are *recherchés*, courteous—a little in the old school way. He is sensitive, punctilious; speaks well, roundly, fluently, plausibly, and is skilled in pouring oil upon the waters of stormy debate.

He is, perhaps, fifty years of age, but has a youthful look; is about five feet eight in height, slender, neat, with an air of military compactness; looks especially well on horseback.

EMMA C. EMBURY

MRS. EMBURY is one of the most noted, and certainly one of the most meritorious of our female *littérateurs*. She has been many years before the public—her earliest compositions, I believe, having been contributed to the "New York Mirror" under the *nom de plume* "Ianthe." They attracted very general attention at the time of their appearance and materially aided the paper. They were subsequently, with some other pieces, published in volume form, with the title "Guido and other Poems." The book has been long out of print. Of late days its author has written but little poetry—that little, however, has at least indicated a poetic capacity of no common order.

Yet as a poetess she is comparatively unknown, her reputation in this regard having been quite overshadowed by that which she has acquired as a writer of tales. In this latter capacity she has, upon the whole, no equal among her sex in America —certainly no superior. She is not so vigorous as Mrs. Stephens, nor so vivacious as Miss Chubbuck, nor so caustic as Miss Leslie, nor so dignified as Miss Sedgwick, nor so graceful, fanciful and *spirituelle* as Mrs. Osgood, but is *deficient* in none of the qualities for which these ladies are noted, and in certain particulars surpasses them all. Her subjects are *fresh*, if not always vividly original, and she manages them with more skill than is usually exhibited by our magazinists. She has

also much imagination and sensibility, while her style is pure, earnest, and devoid of verbiage and exaggeration. I make a point of *reading* all tales to which I see the name of Mrs. Embury appended. The story by which she has attained most reputation is "Constance Latimer, the Blind Girl."

Mrs. E. is a daughter of Doctor Manly, an eminent physician of New York city. At an early age she married a gentleman of some wealth and of education, as well as of tastes akin to her own. She is noted for her domestic virtues no less than for literary talents and acquirements.

She is about the medium height; complexion, eyes, and hair, light; arched eyebrows; Grecian nose; the mouth a fine one, and indicative of firmness; the whole countenance pleasing, intellectual, and expressive. The portrait in "Graham's Magazine" for January, 1843, has no resemblance to her whatever.

EPES SARGENT

MR. SARGENT is well known to the public as the author of "Velasco, a Tragedy," "The Light of the Light-house, with other Poems," one or two short *nouvelettes*, and numerous contributions to the periodicals. He was also the editor of "Sargent's Magazine," a monthly work, which had the misfortune of falling between two stools, never having been able to make up its mind whether to be popular with the three or dignified with the five dollar journals. It was a "happy *medium*" between the two classes, and met the fate of all happy *media* in dying, as well through lack of foes as of friends. *In medio tutissimus ibis* is the worst advice in the world for the editor of a magazine. Its observance proved the downfall of Mr. Lowell and his really meritorious "Pioneer."

"Velasco" has received some words of commendation from the author of "Ion," and I am ashamed to say, owes most of its home appreciation to this circumstance. Mr. Talfourd's play has, itself, little truly dramatic, with much picturesque and more poetical value; its author, nevertheless, is better entitled to respect as a dramatist than as a critic of dramas. "Velasco," compared with American tragedies generally, is a good tragedy—indeed, an excellent one, but, positively considered, its merits are very inconsiderable. It has many of the traits of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion," to which, in its mode of construction, its scenic effects, and several other points, it bears as close a resemblance

as, in the nature of things, it could very well bear. It is by no means improbable, however, that Mrs. Mowatt received some assistance from Mr. Sargent in the composition of her comedy, or at least was guided by his advice in many particulars of technicality.

"Shells and Sea Weeds," a series of brief poems, recording the incidents of a voyage to Cuba, is, I think, the best work in verse of its author, and evinces a fine fancy, with keen appreciation of the beautiful in natural scenery. Mr. Sargent is fond of sea-pieces, and paints them with skill, flooding them with that warmth and geniality which are their character and their due. "A Life on the Ocean Wave" has attained great popularity, but is by no means so good as the less lyrical compositions, "A Calm," "The Gale," "Tropical Weather," and "A Night Storm at Sea."

"The Light of the Light-house" is a spirited poem, with many musical and fanciful passages, well expressed. For example—

> But, oh, Aurora's crimson light,
> That makes the watch-fire dim,
> Is not a more transporting sight
> Than Ellen is to him.
> He pineth not for fields and brooks
> Wild flowers and singing birds,
> For summer smileth in her looks
> And singeth in her words.

There is something of the Dibdin spirit throughout the poem, and, indeed, throughout all the sea poems of Mr. Sargent—a little *too much* of it, perhaps.

His prose is not quite so meritorious as his poetry. He writes "easily," and is apt at burlesque and sarcasm—both rather broad than original. Mr. Sargent has an excellent memory for good *hits*, and

no little dexterity in their application. To those who meddle little with books, some of his satirical papers must appear brilliant. In a word, he is one of the most prominent members of a very extensive American family—the men of industry, talent and tact.

In stature he is short—not more than five feet five—but well proportioned. His face is a fine one; the features regular and expressive. His demeanor is very gentlemanly. Unmarried, and about thirty years of age.

FRANCES SARGENT OSGOOD

MRS. OSGOOD, for the last three or four years, has been rapidly attaining distinction; and this, evidently, with no effort at attaining it. She seems, in fact, to have no object in view beyond that of giving voice to the fancies or the feelings of the moment. "Necessity," says the proverb, "is the mother of Invention"; and the invention of Mrs. O., at least, springs plainly from necessity—from the necessity of invention. *Not* to write poetry—not to act it, think it, dream it, and be it, is entirely out of her power.

It may be questioned whether with more industry, more method, more definite purpose, more ambition, Mrs. Osgood would have made a more decided impression on the public mind. She might, upon the whole, have written better poems; but the chances are that she would have failed in conveying so vivid and so just an idea of her powers as a poet. The warm *abandonnement* of her style—that charm which now so captivates—is but a portion and a consequence of her unworldly nature—of her disregard of mere fame; but it affords us glimpses, which we could not otherwise have obtained, of a capacity for accomplishing what she has not accomplished, and in all probability never will. In the world of poetry, however, there is already more than enough of uncongenial ambition and pretence.

Mrs. Osgood has taken no care whatever of her literary fame. A great number of her finest compositions, both in verse and prose, have been written

anonymously, and are now lying *perdus* about the country, in out-of-the-way nooks and corners. Many a goodly reputation has been reared upon a far more unstable basis than her unclaimed and uncollected "fugitive pieces."

Her first volume, I believe, was published, seven or eight years ago, by Edward Churton, of London, during the residence of the poetess in that city. I have now lying before me a second edition of it, dated 1842—a beautifully printed book, dedicated to the Reverend Hobard Caunter. It contains a number of what the Bostonians call "juvenile" poems, written when Mrs. O., (then Miss Locke,) could not have been more than thirteen, and evincing unusual precocity. The leading piece is "Elfrida, a Dramatic Poem," but in many respects well entitled to the appellation, "drama." I allude chiefly to the passionate expression of particular portions, to delineation of character, and to occasional scenic effect:—in construction, or plot—in general conduct and plausibility, the play fails; comparatively, of course—for the hand of genius is evinced throughout.

The story is the well known one of Edgar, Elfrida, and Earl Athelwood. The king, hearing of Elfrida's extraordinary beauty, commissions his favorite, Athelwood, to visit her and ascertain if report speaks truly of her charms. The earl, becoming himself enamored, represents the lady as anything but beautiful or agreeable. The king is satisfied. Athelwood soon afterward woos and weds Elfrida—giving Edgar to understand that the heiress' wealth is the object. The true state of the case, however, is betrayed by an enemy; and the monarch resolves to visit the earl at his castle and to judge for himself. Hearing of this resolve, Athelwood, in despair,

confesses to his wife his duplicity, and entreats her to render null as far as possible the effect of her charms by dressing with unusual plainness. This the wife promises to do; but, fired with ambition and resentment at the wrong done her, arrays herself in her most magnificent and becoming costume. The king is charmed, and the result is the destruction of Athelwood and the elevation of Elfrida to the throne.

These incidents are well adapted to dramatic purposes, and with more of that art which Mrs. Osgood does *not* possess, she might have woven them into a tragedy which the world would not willingly let die. As it is, she has merely succeeded in showing what she might, should, and could have done, and yet, unhappily, did not.

The character of Elfrida is the bright point of the play. Her beauty and consciousness of it—her indignation and uncompromising ambition—are depicted with power. There is a fine blending of the poetry of passion and the passion of poetry, in the lines which follow:

> ——Why even now he bends
> In courtly reverence to some mincing dame,
> Haply the star of Edgar's festival,
> While I, with this high heart and queenly form,
> Pine in neglect and solitude. Shall it *be?*
> Shall I not rend my fetters and be free?
> Ay!—be the cooing turtle-dove content,
> Safe in her own loved nest!—the eagle soars
> On restless plumes to meet the imperial sun.
> And Edgar is my day-star in whose light
> This heart's proud wings shall yet be furled to rest.
> Why wedded I with Athelwood? For this?
> No!—even at the altar when I stood—
> My hand in his, his gaze upon my cheek—
> I did forget his presence and the scene;

A gorgeous vision rose before mine eyes
Of power and pomp and regal pageantry;
A king was at my feet and, as he knelt,
I smiled and, turning, met—a husband's kiss.
But still I smiled—for in my guilty soul
I blessed him as the being by whose means
I should be brought within my idol's sphere—
My haughty, glorious, brave, impassioned Edgar!
Well I remember when these wondering eyes
Beheld him first. I was a maiden then—
A dreaming child—but from that thrilling hour
I've been a queen in visions!

Very similar, but even more glowing, is the love-inspired eloquence of Edgar.

Earth hath no language, love, befitting thee,
For its own children it hath pliant speech;
And mortals know to call a blossom fair,
A wavelet graceful, and a jewel rich;
But thou!—oh, teach me, sweet, the angel tongue
They talked in Heaven ere thou didst leave its bowers
To bloom below!

To this Elfrida replies—

If Athelwood should hear thee!

And to this, Edgar—

Name not the felon knave to me, Elfrida!
My soul is flame whene'er I think of him.
Thou lovest him not?—oh, *say* thou dost not love him!

The answer of Elfrida at this point is profoundly true to nature, and would alone suffice to assure any critic of Mrs. Osgood's dramatic talent.

When but a child I saw thee in my dreams!

The woman's soul here shrinks from the direct avowal of want of love for her husband, and flies to poetry and appeals to fate by way of excusing that infidelity which is at once her glory and her shame.

In general, the "situations" of "Elfrida" are improbable or ultra-romantic, and its incidents unconsequential, seldom furthering the business of the play. The *dénouement* is feeble, and its moral of very equivocal tendency indeed—but I have already shown that it is the especial office neither of poetry nor of the drama, to inculcate truth, unless incidentally. Mrs. Osgood, however, although she has unquestionably failed in writing a good play, has, even in failing, given indication of dramatic power. The great tragic element, passion, breathes in every line of her composition, and had she but the art, or the patience, to model or control it, she might be eminently successful as a playwright. I am justified in these opinions not only by "Elfrida," but by "Woman's Trust, a Dramatic Sketch," included, also, in the English edition.

A Masked Ball. Madelon and a Stranger in a Recess.

Mad.—Why hast thou led me here?
My friends may deem it strange—unmaidenly,
This lonely converse with an unknown mask.
Yet in thy voice there is a thrilling power
That makes me love to linger. It is like
The tone of one far distant—only his
Was gayer and more soft
Strang. Sweet Madelon!
Say thou wilt smile upon the passionate love
That thou alone canst waken! Let me hope!

Mad.—Hush! hush! I may not hear thee. Know'st thou not
I am betrothed?
Strang.—Alas! too well I know;
But I could tell thee such a tale of him—
Thine early love—'twould fire those timid eyes
With lightning pride and anger—curl that lip—
That gentle lip to passionate contempt
For man's light falsehood. Even now he bends—
Thy Rupert bends o'er one as fair as thou,

In fond affection. Even now his heart—
Mad.—Doth my eye flash?—doth my lip curl with scorn?
'Tis scorn of thee, thou perjured stranger, not—
Oh, not of him, the generous and the true!
Hast thou e'er seen my Rupert?—hast thou met
Those proud and fearless eyes that never quailed,
As Falsehood quails, before another's glance—
As thine even now are shrinking from mine own—
The spirit beauty of that open brow—
The noble head—the free and gallant step—
The lofty mein whose majesty is won
From inborn honor—hast thou seen all this?
And darest thou speak of faithlessness and him
In the same idle breath? Thou little know'st
The strong confiding of a woman's heart,
When woman loves as—I do. Speak no more!
Strang.—Deluded girl! I tell thee he is false—
False as yon fleeting cloud!
Mad. True as the sun!
Strang.—The very wind less wayward than his heart!
Mad.—The forest oak less firm! He loved me not
For the frail rose-hues and the fleeting light
Of youthful loveliness—ah, many a cheek
Of softer bloom, and many a dazzling eye
More rich than mine may win my wanderer's gaze.
He loved me for my love, the deep, the fond—
For my unfaltering truth; he cannot find—
Rove where he will—a heart that beats for him
With such intense, absorbing tenderness—
Such idolizing constancy as mine.
Why should he change, then?—I am still the same.
Strang.—Sweet infidel! *wilt* thou have ruder proof?
Rememberest thou a little golden case
Thy Rupert wore, in which a gem was shrined?
A gem I would not barter for a world—
An angel face; its *sunny wealth of hair*
In radiant ripples bathed the graceful throat
And dimpled shoulders; round the rosy curve
Of the sweet mouth a smile seemed wandering ever;
While in the depths of azure fire that gleamed
Beneath the drooping lashes, slept a world
Of eloquent meaning, passionate yet pure—
Dreamy—subdued—but oh, how beautiful!

A look of timid, pleading tenderness
That should have been a talisman to charm
His restless heart for aye. Rememberest thou?
Mad.—(*impatiently.*) I do—I do remember—'twas my own
He prized it as his life—I gave it him—
What of it!—speak!
Strang.—(*showing a miniature,*) Lady, behold that gift!
Mad.—(*clasping her hands*) Merciful Heaven! is my Rupert dead?
(*After a pause, during which she seems overwhelmed with agony*)
How died he?—when?—oh, *thou* wast by his side
In that last hour and *I* was far away!
My blessed love'—give me that token!—speak!
What message sent he to his Madelon?
Strang.—(*Supporting her and strongly agitated,*)
He is not dead, dear lady!—grieve not thus!
Mad.—He is not false, sir stranger!
Strang. For thy sake,
Would he were worthier! One other proof
I'll give thee, loveliest! if thou lov'st him still,
I'll not believe thee woman. Listen, then!
A faithful lover breathes not of his bliss
To other ears. Wilt hear a fable, lady?

Here the stranger details some incidents of the first wooing of Madelon by Rupert, and concludes with,

> Lady, my task is o'er—dost doubt me still?
> *Mad. Doubt thee, my Rupert! ah, I know thee now.*
> Fling by that hateful mask!—let me unclasp it!
> No! thou wouldst *not* betray thy Madelon.

The "Miscellaneous Poems" of the volume—many of them written in childhood—are, of course, various in character and merit. "The Dying Rosebud's Lament," although by no means one of the best, will very well serve to show the earlier and most characteristic manner of the poetess:

Ah, me!—ah wo is me
That I should perish now,
With the dear sunlight just let in
Upon my balmy brow.

My leaves, instinct with glowing life,
Were quivering to unclose:
My happy heart with love was rife—
I was almost a rose.

Nerved by a hope, warm, rich, intense,
Already I had risen
Above my cage's curving fence—
My green and graceful prison.

My pouting lips, by Zephyr pressed,
Were just prepared to part,
And whispered to the wooing wind
The rapture of my heart.

In new-born fancies revelling,
My mossy cell half riven,
Each thrilling leaflet seemed a wing
To bear me into Heaven.

How oft, while yet *an infant-flower,*
My crimson cheek I've laid
Against the green bars of my bower,
Impatient of the shade.

And, pressing up and peeping through
Its small but precious vistas,
Sighed for the lovely light and dew
That blessed my elder sisters.

I saw the *sweet breeze rippling* o'er
Their leaves that loved the play,
Though the light thief stole all the store
Of dew-drop gems away.

I thought how happy I should be
Such diamond wreaths to wear,
And frolic with a rose's glee
With sunbeam, bird and air.

Ah, me!—ah, wo is me, that I,
Ere yet my leaves unclose,
With all my wealth of sweets *must die*
Before I am a rose!

The poetical reader will agree with me that few things have ever been written (by any poet, at any age,) more delicately fanciful than the passages italicized—and yet they are the work of a girl not more than fourteen years of age. The clearness and force of expression, and the nice appositeness of the overt and insinuated meaning, are, when we consider the youth of the writer, even more remarkable than the fancy.

I cannot speak of Mrs. Osgood's poems without a strong propensity to ring the changes upon the indefinite word "grace" and its derivatives. About everything she writes we perceive this indescribable charm—of which, perhaps, the elements are a vivid fancy and a quick sense of the proportionate. Grace, however, may be most satisfactorily defined as "a term applied, in despair, to that class of the impressions of Beauty which admit of no analysis." It is in this irresoluble effect that Mrs. Osgood excels any poetess of her country—and it is to this easily appreciable effect that her *popularity* is owing. Nor is she more graceful herself than a lover of the graceful, under whatever guise it is presented to her consideration. The sentiment renders itself manifest, in innumerable instances, as well throughout her prose as her poetry. Whatever be her theme, she at once *extorts* from it its whole essentiality of *grace*. Fanny Ellsler has been often lauded; true poets have sung her praises; but we look in vain for anything written about her, which so distinctly and vividly paints her to the eye as the half dozen

quatrains which follow. They are to be found in the English volume:

She comes!—the spirit of the dance!
And but for those large eloquent eyes,
Where passion speaks in every glance,
She'd seem a wanderer from the skies.

So light that, *gazing breathless there,*
Lest the celestial dream should go,
You'd think the music in the air
Waved the fair vision to and fro.

Or think the melody's sweet flow
Within the radiant creature played,
And those soft wreathing arms of snow
And white sylph feet the music made.

Now gliding slow with dreamy grace,
Her eyes beneath their lashes lost,
Now motionless, with lifted face,
And small hands on her bosom crossed.

And now with flashing eyes she springs—
Her whole bright figure raised in air,
As if her soul had spread its wings
And poised her one wild instant there!

She spoke not—but, so richly fraught
With language are her glance and smile
That, when the curtain fell, I thought
She had been talking all the while.

This is, indeed, poetry—and of the most unquestionable kind—poetry *truthful* in the proper sense—that is to say, breathing of Nature. There is here nothing forced or artificial—no hardly sustained enthusiasm. The poetess speaks because she feels, and *what* she feels; but then what she feels is felt only by the truly poetical. The thought in the last line of the quatrain will not be so fully appreciated

by the reader as it should be; for latterly it has been imitated, plagiarized, repeated *ad infinitum:*—but the other passages italicized have still left them all their original effect. The idea in the last two lines is exquisitely *näive* and natural; that in the last two lines of the second quatrain, beautiful beyond measure; that of the whole fifth quatrain, *magnificent*—unsurpassed in the entire compass of American poetry. It is instinct with the noblest poetical requisite—imagination.

Of the same trait I find, to my surprise, one of the best exemplifications among the "Juvenile Rhymes."

> For Fancy is a fairy that can hear,
> Ever, the melody of Nature's voice
> And see all lovely visions that she will.
> She drew *a picture of a beauteous bird*
> *With plumes of radiant green and gold inwoven,*
> *Banished from its beloved resting place,*
> *And fluttering in vain hope from tree to tree,*
> *And bade us think how, like it, the sweet season*
> *From one bright shelter to another fled—*
> *First from the maple waved her emerald pinions,*
> *But lingered still upon the oak and elm,*
> *Till, frightened by rude breezes even from them,*
> *With mournful sigh she moaned her sad farewell.*

The little poem called "The Music Box" has been as widely circulated as any of Mrs Osgood's compositions. The melody and harmony of this *jeu d'esprit* are perfect, and there is in it a rich tint of that epigrammatism for which the poetess is noted. Some of the *intentional* epigrams interspersed through the works are peculiarly happy. Here is one which, while replete with the rarest "spirit of point," is yet something more than pointed.

TO AN ATHEIST POET

Lovest thou the music of the sea?
  Callest thou the sunshine bright?
His voice is more than melody—
  His smile is more than light.

Here again, is something very similar:

Fanny shuts her smiling eyes,
  Then because she cannot see,
Thoughtless simpleton! she cries
  "Ah! you can't see me."

Fanny's like the sinner vain
  Who, with spirit shut and dim,
Thinks, because he sees not Heaven,
  Heaven beholds not him.

Is it not a little surprising, however, that a writer capable of so much precision and finish as the author of these epigrams *must* be, should have failed to see how much of force is lost in the inversion of "the sinner vain?" Why not have written "Fanny's like the silly sinner?"—or, if "silly" be thought too jocose, "the blinded sinner?" The rhythm, at the same time, would thus be much improved by bringing the lines,

Fanny's like the silly sinner,
Thinks because he sees not Heaven,

into *exact* equality.

In mingled epigrams and *espieglerie* Mrs. Osgood is even more especially at home. I have seldom seen anything in this way more happily done than the song entitled "*If he can.*"

"The Unexpected Declaration" is, perhaps, even a finer specimen of the same manner. It is one of that class of compositions which Mrs. Osgood has

made almost exclusively her own. Had I seen it without her name, I should have had no hesitation in ascribing it to her; for there is no other person—in America certainly—who does anything of a similar kind with anything like a similar piquancy.

The point of this poem, however, might have been sharpened, and the polish increased in lustre, by the application of the emory of brevity. From what the lover says much might well have been omitted; and I should have preferred leaving out altogether the autorial comments; for the story is fully told without them. The "Why do you weep?" "Why do you frown?" and "Why do you smile?" supply all the imagination requires; to supply *more* than it requires, oppresses and offends it. Nothing more deeply grieves it—or more vexes the true taste in general, than *hyperism* of any kind. In Germany, *Wohlgeborn* is a loftier title than *Edelgeborn;* and in Greece, the thrice-victorious at the Olympic games could claim a statue of the size of life, while he who had conquered but once was entitled *only* to a colossal one.

The English collection of which I speak was entitled "A Wreath of Wild Flowers from New England." It met with a *really* cordial reception in Great Britain—was favorably noticed by the "Literary Gazette," "Times," "Atlas," "Monthly Chronicle," and especially by the "Court Journal," "The Court and Ladies' Magazine," "La Belle Assemblée," and other similar works. "We have long been familiar," says the high authority of the "Literary Gazette," "with the name of our fair author. . . . . Our expectations have been fulfilled, and we have here a delightful gathering of the sweetest of wild flowers, all looking as fresh and beautiful as if they had grown in the richest

of English pasture in place of having been 'nursed by the cataract.' True, the wreath might have been improved with a little more care—a trifling attention or two paid to the formation of it. A stalk here and there that obtrudes itself between the bells of the flowers, might have become so interwoven as to have been concealed, and the whole have looked as if it had grown in that perfect and beautiful form. Though, after all, we are perhaps too chary; for in Nature every leaf is not ironed out to a form, nor propped up with a wiry precision, but blown and ruffled by the refreshing breezes, and looking as careless and easy and unaffected as a child that bounds along with its silken locks tossed to and fro just as the wind uplifts them. Page after page of this volume have we perused with a feeling of pleasure and admiration." The "Court Journal" more emphatically says:—"Her wreath is one of violets, sweet-scented, pure and modest; so lovely that the hand that wove it should not neglect additionally to enrich it by turning her love and kindness to things of larger beauty. Some of the smaller lyrics in the volume are *perfectly* beautiful —beautiful in their chaste and exquisite simplicity and the perfect elegance of their composition." In fact, there was *that* about "The Wreath of Wild Flowers"—that inexpressible *grace* of thought and manner—which never fails to find ready echo in the hearts of the aristocracy and refinement of Great Britain;—and it was here especially that Mrs. Osgood found welcome. Her husband's merits as an artist had already introduced her into distinguished society, (she was petted, in especial, by Mrs. Norton and Rogers,) but the publication of her poems had at once an evidently favorable effect upon his fortunes. His pictures were placed in a

most advantageous light by her poetical and conversational ability.

Messrs. Clarke and Austin, of New York, have lately issued another, but still a very uncomplete collection of "Poems by Frances S. Osgood." In general, it includes by no means the best of her works. "The Daughter of Herodias"—one of her longest compositions, and a very noble poem, putting me in mind of the best efforts of Mrs. Hemans—is omitted:—it is included, however, in the last edition of Doctor Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America." In Mrs. C. and A.'s collection there occur, too, very many of those half sentimental, half allegorical compositions of which, at one period, the authoress seemed to be particularly fond—for the reason, perhaps, that they afforded her good opportunity for the exercise of her ingenuity and epigrammatic talent:—no poet, however, can admit them to be poetry at all. Still, the volume contains some pieces which enable us to take a new view of the powers of the writer. A few additional years, with their inevitable sorrow, appear to have stirred the depths of her *heart*. We see less of frivolity—less of vivacity—more of tenderness—earnestness—even passion—and far more of the true imagination as distinguished from its subordinate, fancy. The one prevalent trait, *grace*, alone distinctly remains. "The Spirit of Poetry," "To Sybil," "The Birth of the Callitriche," and "The Child and its Angel-Playmate," would do honor to any of our poets. "She Loves Him Yet," nevertheless, will serve, better than either of these poems, to show the alteration of manner referred to. It is not only rythmically perfect, but it evinces much originality in its structure. The verses commencing, "Yes, lower to the level," are in a somewhat similar tone,

but are more noticeable for their terse energy of expression.

In not presenting to the public at one view all that she has written in verse, Mrs. Osgood has incurred the risk of losing that credit to which she is entitled on the score of versatility—of variety in invention and expression. There is scarcely a form of poetical composition in which she has not made experiment; and there is none in which she has not very happily succeeded. Her defects are chiefly negative and by no means numerous. Her versification is sometimes exceedingly good, but more frequently feeble through the use of harsh consonants, and such words as "*thou'dst*" for "*thou wouldst*," with other unnecessary contractions, inversions, and obsolete expressions. Her imagery is often mixed;—indeed it is rarely otherwise. The epigrammatism of her conclusions gives to her poems, as wholes, the air of being more skilfully constructed than they really are. On the other hand, we look in vain throughout her works for an offence against the finer taste, or against decorum —for a low thought or a platitude. A happy refinement—an instinct of the pure and delicate—is one of her most noticeable excellencies. She may be properly commended, too, for originality of poetic invention, whether in the conception of a theme or in the manner of treating it. Consequences of this trait are her point and piquancy. Fancy and *näiveté* appear in all she writes. Regarding the loftier merits, I am forced to speak of her in more measured terms. She has occasional passages of true imagination—but scarcely the glowing, vigorous, and *sustained* ideality of Mrs. Maria Brooks—or even, in general, the less ethereal elevation of Mrs. Welby. In that indescribable something, however,

which, for want of a more definite term, we are accustomed to call "grace"—that charm so magical, because at once so shadowy and so potent—that Will o' the Wisp which, in its *supreme* development, may be said to involve nearly *all* that is valuable in poetry—she has, unquestionably, no rival among her countrywomen.

Of pure prose—of prose proper—she has, perhaps, never written a line in her life. Her usual magazine papers are a class by themselves. She begins with a resolute effort at being sedate—that is to say, sufficiently prosaic and matter-of-fact for the purpose of a legend or an essay; but, after a few sentences, we behold uprising the leaven of the Muse; then, with a flourish and some vain attempts at repression, a scrap of verse renders itself manifest; then comes a little poem outright; then another and another and another, with impertinent patches of prose in between—until at length the mask is thrown fairly off and far away, and the whole article—sings.

Upon the whole, I have spoken of Mrs. Osgood so much in detail, less on account of what she has actually done than on account of what I perceive in her the ability to do.

In character she is ardent, sensitive, impulsive—the very soul of truth and honor; a worshipper of the beautiful, with a heart so radically artless as to seem abundant in art; universally admired, respected, and beloved. In person, she is about the medium height, slender even to fragility, graceful whether in action or repose; complexion usually pale; hair black and glossy; eyes a clear, luminous grey, large, and with singular capacity for expression.

LYDIA M. CHILD

MRS. CHILD has acquired a just celebrity by many compositions of high merit, the most noticeable of which are "Hobomok," "Philothea," and a "History of the Condition of Women." "Philothea," in especial, is written with great vigor, and, as a classical romance, is not far inferior to the "Anacharsis" of Barthelemi;—its style is a model for purity, chastity, and ease. Some of her magazine papers are distinguished for graceful and brilliant *imagination*—a quality rarely noticed in our countrywomen. She continues to write a great deal for the monthlies and other journals, and invariably writes well. Poetry she has not often attempted, but I make no doubt that in this she would excel. It seems, indeed, the legitimate province of her fervid and fanciful nature. I quote one of her shorter compositions, as well to instance (from the subject) her intense appreciation of genius in others as to exemplify the force of her poetic expression:—

MARIUS AMID THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE.

Pillars are fallen at thy feet,
  Fanes quiver in the air,
A prostrate city is thy seat,
  And thou alone art there.

No change comes o'er thy noble brow,
  Though ruin is around thee;
Thine eyebeam burns as proudly now
  As when the laurel crowned thee.

It cannot bend thy lofty soul
Though friends and fame depart—
The car of Fate may o'er thee roll
Nor crush thy Roman heart.

And genius hath electric power
Which earth can never tame;
Bright suns may scorch and dark clouds lower,
Its flash is still the same.

The dreams we loved in early life
May melt like mist away;
High thoughts may seem, 'mid passion's strife,
Like Carthage in decay;

And proud hopes in the human heart
May be to ruin hurled,
Like mouldering monuments of art
Heaped on a sleeping world;

Yet there is something will not die
Where life hath once been fair;
Some towering thoughts still rear on high,
Some Roman lingers there.

Mrs. Child, casually observed, has nothing particularly striking in her personal appearance. One would pass her in the street a dozen times without notice. She is low in stature and slightly framed. Her complexion is florid; eyes and hair are dark; features in general diminutive. The expression of her countenance, when animated, is highly intellectual. Her dress is usually plain, not even neat—anything but fashionable. Her bearing needs excitement to impress it with life and dignity. She is of that order of beings who are themselves only on "great occasions." Her husband is still living. She has no children. I need scarcely add that she has always been distinguished for her energetic and active philanthropy.

THOMAS DUNN BROWN

I HAVE seen one or two scraps of verse with this gentleman's *nom de plume** appended, which had considerable merit. For example:

A sound melodious shook the breeze
When thy beloved name was heard:
Such was the music in the word
Its dainty rhythm the pulses stirred
But passed forever joys like these.
There is no joy, no light, no day;
But black despair and night *al-way*
And thickening gloom:
And this, Azthene, is my doom.

Was it for this, for weary years,
I strove among the sons of men,
And by *the magic of my pen*—
Just sorcery—walked the lion's den
Of slander void of tears and fears—
And all for thee? For thee! alas,
As is the image on a glass
So baseless *seems*,
Azthene, all my early *dreams*.

I must confess, however, that I do not appreciate the "dainty rhythm" of such a word as "Azthene," and, perhaps, there is some taint of egotism in the passage about "the magic" of Mr. Brown's pen. Let us be charitable, however, and set all this down under the head of the pure imagination or invention —the first of poetical requisites. The *inexcusable*

*Thomas Dunn English.

sin of Mr. Brown is imitation—if this be not too mild a term. When Barry Cornwall, for example, sings about a "dainty rhythm," Mr. Brown forthwith, in B flat, hoots about it too. He has taken, however, his most unwarrantable liberties in the way of plagiarism, with Mr. Henry B. Hirst, of Philadelphia—a poet whose merits have not yet been properly estimated.

I place Mr. Brown, to be sure, on my list of literary people not on account of his poetry, (which I presume he himself is not weak enough to estimate very highly,) but on the score of his having edited, for several months, "with the aid of numerous collaborators," a magazine called "The Aristidean." This work, although professedly a "monthly," was issued at irregular intervals, and was unfortunate, I fear, in not attaining at any period more than about fifty subscribers.

Mr. Brown has at least that amount of talent which would enable him to succeed in his father's profession—that of a ferryman on the Schuylkill—but the fate of "The Aristidean" should indicate to him that, to prosper in any higher walk of life, he must apply himself to study. No spectacle can be more ludicrous than that of a man without the commonest school education, busying himself in attempts to instruct mankind on topics of polite literature. The absurdity, in such cases, does not lie merely in the ignorance displayed by the would-be instructor, but in the transparency of the shifts by which he endeavors to keep this ignorance concealed. The "editor of the Aristidean," for example, was not the public laughing-stock throughout the five months of his magazine's existence, so much on account of writing "lay" for "lie," "went" for "gone," "set" for "sit," etc., etc., or for coupling

nouns in the plural with verbs in the singular—as when he writes, above,

> ——so baseless *seems*,
> Azthene, all my earthly *dreams*—

he was not, I say, laughed at *so much* on account of his excusable deficiencies in English grammar (although an editor should undoubtedly be able to write *his own name*) as on account of the pertinacity with which he exposed his weakness, in lamenting the "typographical blunders" which so unluckily *would* creep into his work. He should have reflected that there is not in all America a proof-reader so blind as to permit *such* errors to escape him. The rhyme, for instance, in the matter of the "dreams" that "seems," would have distinctly shown even the most uneducated printers' devil that he, the devil, had no right to meddle with so obviously an *intentional* peculiarity.

Were I writing merely for American readers, I should not, of course, have introduced Mr. Brown's name in this book. With us, *grotesqueries* such as "The Aristidean" and its editor, are not altogether unparalleled, and are sufficiently well understood—but my purpose is to convey to foreigners some idea of a condition of literary affairs among us, which otherwise they might find it difficult to comprehend or to conceive. That Mr. Brown's blunders are really such as I have described them—that I have not distorted their character or exaggerated their grossness in any respect—that there existed in New York, for some months, as conductor of a magazine that called itself *the organ of the Tyler party*, and was even mentioned, at times, by respectable papers, a man who obviously *never went to school*, and was so profoundly ignorant as not to know that he could

not spell—are serious and positive facts—uncolored in the slightest degree—demonstrable, in a word, upon the spot, by reference to almost any editorial sentence upon any page of the magazine in question. But a single instance will suffice:—Mr. Hirst, in one of his poems, has the lines,

> Oh Odin! 'twas pleasure—'twas passion to see
> Her serfs sweep like wolves on a lambkin like me.

At page 200 of "The Aristidean" for September, 1845, Mr. Brown, commenting on the English of the passage, says:—"This lambkin might have used better language than '*like me*'—unless he intended it for a specimen of choice Choctaw, when it may, for all we know to the contrary, pass muster." It is needless, I presume, to proceed farther in a search for the most direct proof possible or conceivable, of the ignorance of Mr. Brown—who, in similar cases, invariably writes—"like I."

In an editorial announcement on page 242 of the same "number," he says:—"This and the three succeeding *numbers brings* the work up to January and with the two *numbers* previously published *makes* up a volume or half year of *numbers*." But enough of this absurdity:—Mr. Brown had, for the motto on his magazine cover, the words of Richelieu,

> ———Men call me cruel;
> I am not:—I am *just*.

Here the two monosyllables "an ass" should have been appended. They were no doubt omitted through "one of those d——d typographical blunders" which, through life, have been at once the bane and the antidote of Mr. Brown.

I make these remarks in no spirit of unkindness. Mr. B. is yet young—certainly not more than thirty-

eight or nine—and might readily improve himself at points where he is most defective. No one of any generosity would think the worse of him for getting private instruction.

I do not personally know him. About his appearance there is nothing very remarkable—except that he exists in a perpetual state of vacillation between mustachio and goatee. In character, a *windbeutel.*

ELIZABETH BOGART

MISS BOGART has been for many years before the public as a writer of poems and tales (principally the former) for the periodicals, having made her *debût* as a contributor to the original "New York Mirror." Doctor Griswold, in a foot-note appended to one of her poems quoted in his "Poets and Poetry," speaks of the "volume" from which he quotes; but Miss Bogart has not yet collected her writings in volume form. Her fugitive pieces have usually been signed "Estelle." They are noticeable for nerve, dignity and finish. Perhaps the four stanzas entitled "He came too Late," and introduced into Dr. Griswold's volume are the most favorable specimen of her manner. Had he not quoted them I should have copied them here.

Miss Bogart is a member of one of the oldest families in the State. An interesting sketch of her progenitors is to be found in Thompson's "History of Long Island." She is about the medium height, straight and slender; black hair and eyes; countenance full of vivacity and intelligence. She converses with fluency and spirit, enunciates distinctly, and exhibits interest in whatever is addressed to her—a rare quality in good talkers; has a keen appreciation of genius and of natural scenery; is cheerful and fond of society.

CATHERINE M. SEDGWICK

MISS SEDGWICK is not only one of our most celebrated and most meritorious writers, but attained reputation at a period when *American* reputation in letters was regarded as a phenomenon; and thus, like Irving, Cooper, Paulding, Bryant, Halleck, and one or two others, she is indebted, certainly, for *some* portion of the esteem in which she was and is held, to that patriotic pride and gratitude to which I have already alluded, and for which we must make reasonable allowance in estimating the absolute merit of our literary pioneers.

Her earlist published work of any length was "A New England Tale," designed in the first place as a religious tract, but expanding itself into a volume of considerable size. Its success—partially owing, perhaps, to the influence of the parties for whom or at whose instigation it was written—encouraged the author to attempt a novel of somewhat greater elaborateness as well as length, and "Redwood" was soon announced, establishing her at once as the first female prose writer of her country. It was reprinted in England, and translated, I believe, into French and Italian. "Hope Leslie" next appeared—also a novel—and was more favorably received even than its predecessors. Afterwards came "Clarence," not quite so successful, and then "The Linwoods," which took rank in the public esteem with "Hope Leslie." These are all of her longer prose fictions, but she has written numerous shorter

ones of great merit—such as "The Rich Poor Man and the Poor Rich Man," "Live and let Live," (both in volume form,) with various articles for the magazines and annuals, to which she is still an industrious contributor. About ten years since she published a compilation of several of her fugitive prose pieces, under the title "Tales and Sketches," and a short time ago a series of "Letters from Abroad"—not the least popular or least meritorious of her compositions.

Miss Sedgwick has now and then been nicknamed "the Miss Edgeworth of America"; but she has done nothing to bring down upon her the vengeance of so equivocal a title. That she has thoroughly studied and profoundly admired Miss Edgeworth may, indeed, be gleaned from her works—but what woman has not? Of imitation there is not the slightest perceptible taint. In both authors we observe the same tone of thoughtful morality, but here all resemblance ceases. In the Englishwoman there is far more of a certain Scotch prudence, in the American more of warmth, tenderness, sympathy for the weakness of her sex. Miss Edgeworth is the more acute, the more inventive, and the more rigid. Miss Sedgwick is the more womanly.

All her stories are full of interest. The "New England Tale" and "Hope Leslie" are especially so, but upon the whole I am best pleased with "The Linwoods." Its prevaling features are ease, purity of style, pathos, and verisimilitude. To plot it has little pretension. The scene is in America, and, as the sub-title indicates, "Sixty years since." This, by-the-by, is taken from "Waverley." The adventures of the family of a Mr. Linwood, a resident of New York, form the principal theme. The character of this gentleman is happily drawn, although

there is an antagonism between the initial and concluding touches—the end has forgotten the beginning, like the goverment of Trinculo. Mr. L. has two children, Herbert and Isabella. Being himself a Tory, the boyish impulses of his son in favor of the revolutionists are watched with anxiety and vexation; and on the breaking out of the war, Herbert, positively refusing to drink the king's health, is expelled from home by his father—an event on which hinges the main interest of the narrative. Isabella is the heroine proper, full of generous impulses, beautiful, intellectual, *spirituelle*—indeed, a most fascinating creature. But the family of a Widow Lee throws quite a charm over all the book—a matronly, pious and devoted mother, yielding up her son to the cause of her country—the son gallant, chivalrous, yet thoughtful; a daughter, gentle, loving, melancholy, and susceptible of light impressions. This daughter, Bessie Lee, is one of the most effective personations to be found in our fictitious literature, and may lay claims to the distinction of originality—no slight distinction where *character* is concerned. It is the old story, to be sure, of a meek and trusting heart broken by treachery and abandonment, but in the narration of Miss Sedgwick it breaks upon us with all the freshness of novel emotion. Deserted by her lover, an accomplished and aristocratical coxcomb, the spirits of the gentle girl sink gradually from trust to simple hope, from hope to anxiety, from anxiety to doubt, from doubt to melancholy, and from melancholy to madness. The gradation is depicted in a masterly manner. She escapes from her home in New England and endeavors to make her way alone to New York, with the object of restoring to him who had abandoned her, some tokens he had given her of his love—an act

which her disordered fancy assures her will effect in her own person a disenthralment from passion. Her piety, her madness, and her beauty, stand her in stead of the lion of Una, and she reaches the city in safety. In that portion of the narrative which embodies this journey are some passages which no mind unimbued with the purest spirit of poetry could have conceived, and they have often made me wonder why Miss Sedgwick has never written a poem.

I have already alluded to her usual excellence of style; but she has a very peculiar fault—that of discrepancy between the words and character of the speaker—the fault, indeed, more properly belongs to the depicting of character itself.

For example, at page 38, vol. 1, of "The Linwoods":—

"No more of my contempt for the Yankees, Hal, an' thou lovest me," replied Jasper. "You remember Æsop's advice to Crœsus at the Persian court?"

"No, I am sure I do not. You have the most provoking way of resting the lever by which you bring out your own knowledge, on your friend's ignorance."

Now all this is pointed, (although the last sentence would have been improved by letting the words "on your friend's ignorance" come immediately after "resting,") but it is by no means the language of schoolboys—and such are the speakers.

Again, at page 226, vol. 1, of the same novel:—

"Now, out on you, you lazy, slavish loons!" cried Rose. "Cannot you see these men are raised up to fight for freedom for more than themselves? If the chain be broken at one end, the links will fall apart sooner or later. When you see the sun on the mountain top, you may be sure it will shine into the deepest valleys before long."

Who would suppose this graceful eloquence to

proceed from the mouth of a negro woman? Yet such is Rose.

Again, at page 24, vol. 1, same novel:—

"True, I never saw her; but I tell you, young lad, that there is such a thing as seeing the shadow of things far distant and past, and never seeing the realities, though they it be that cast the shadows."

Here the speaker is an old woman who, a few sentences before, has been boasting of her proficiency in "*tellin' fortins.*"

I might object, too, very decidedly to the vulgarity of such a phrase as "I put in my oar," (meaning, "I joined in the conversation,") when proceeding from the mouth of so well-bred a personage as Miss Isabella Linwood. There are, certainly, most remarkable inadvertences.

As the author of many *books*—of several absolutely bound volumes in the ordinary "novel" form of auld lang syne, Miss Sedgwick has a certain adventitious hold upon the attention of the public, a species of tenure that has nothing to do with literature proper—a very decided advantage, in short, over her more modern rivals whom fashion and the growing influence *of the want* of an international copyright law have condemned to the external insignificance of the yellow-backed pamphleteering.

We must permit, however, neither this advantage nor the more obvious one of her having been one of our *pioneers*, to bias the critical judgment as it makes estimate of her abilities in comparison with those of her *present* cotemporaries. She has neither the vigor of Mrs. Stephens nor the vivacious grace of Miss Chubbuck, nor the pure style of Mrs. Embury, nor the classic imagination of Mrs. Child, nor the naturalness of Mrs. Annan, nor the thoughtful and suggestive originality

of Miss Fuller; but in many of the qualities mentioned she excels, and in no one of them is she particularly deficient. She is an author of marked talent, but by no means of such decided genius as would entitle her to that precedence among our female writers which, under the circumstances to which I have alluded, *seems* to be yielded her by the voice of the public.

Strictly speaking, Miss Sedgwick is *not* one of the *literati* of New York city, but she passes here about half or rather more than half her time. Her home is Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Her family is one of the first in America. Her father, Theodore Sedgwick the elder, was an eminent jurist and descended from one of Cromwell's major-generals. Many of her relatives have distinguished themselves in various ways.

She is about the medium height, perhaps a little below it. Her forehead is an unusually fine one; nose of a slightly Roman curve; eyes dark and piercing; mouth well formed and remarkably pleasant in its expression. The portrait in "Graham's Magazine" is by no means a likeness, and, although the hair is represented as curled, (Miss Sedgwick at present wears a cap—at least most usually,) gives her the air of being much older than she is.

Her manners are those of a high-bred woman, but her ordinary *manner* vacillates, in a singular way, between cordiality and a reserve amounting to ***hauteur***.

LEWIS GAYLORD CLARK

MR. CLARK is known principally as the twin brother of the late *Willis* Gaylord Clark, the poet, of Philadelphia, with whom he has often been confounded from similarity both of person and of name. He is known, also, within a more limited circle, as one of the editors of "The Knickerbocker Magazine," and it is in this latter capacity that I must be considered as placing him among literary people. He writes little himself, the editorial scraps which usually appear in fine type at the end of "The Knickerbocker" being the joint composition of a great variety of gentlemen (most of them possessing shrewdness and talent,) connected with diverse journals about the city of New York. It is only in some such manner, as might be supposed, that so amusing and so heterogeneous a medley of chit-chat could be put together. Were a little more pains taken in elevating the *tone* of this "Editors' Table," (which its best friends are forced to admit is at present a little Boweryish,) I should have no hesitation in commending it in general as a very creditable and very entertaining specimen of what may be termed easy writing and hard reading.

It is not, of course, to be understood from anything I have here said, that Mr. Clark does not occasionally contribute editorial matter to the magazine. His compositions, however, are far from numerous, and are always to be distinguished by their style, which is more "easily to be imagined than de-

scribed." It has its merit, beyond doubt, but I shall not undertake to say that either "vigor," "force" or "impressiveness" is the precise term by which that merit should be designated. Mr. Clark once did me the honor to review my poems, and——I forgive him.

"The Knickerbocker" has been long established, and seems to have in it some important elements of success. Its title, for a merely local one, is unquestionably good. Its contributors have usually been men of eminence. Washington Irving was at one period regularly engaged. Paulding, Bryant, Neal, and several others of nearly equal note have also at various times furnished articles, although none of these gentlemen, I believe, continue their communications. In general, the contributed matter has been praiseworthy; the printing, paper, and so forth, have been excellent, and there certainly has been no lack of exertion in the way of what is termed "putting the work before the eye of the public," still some incomprehensible *incubus* has seemed always to sit heavily upon it, and it has never succeeded in attaining *position* among intelligent or educated readers. On account of the manner in which it is necessarily edited, the work is deficient in that absolutely indispensable element, *individuality*. As the editor has no precise character, the magazine, as a matter of course, can have none. When I say "no precise character," I mean that Mr. C., as a literary man, has about him no determinateness, no distinctiveness, no saliency of point;—an apple, in fact, or a pumpkin, has more angles. He is as smooth as oil or a sermon from Doctor Hawks; he is noticeable for nothing in the world except for the markedness by which he is noticeable for nothing.

What is the precise circulation of "The Knickerbocker" at present I am unable to say; it has been

variously stated at from eight to eighteen hundred subscribers. The former estimate is no doubt too low, and the latter, I presume, is far too high. There are, perhaps, some fifteen hundred copies printed.

At the period of his brother's decease, Mr. Lewis G. Clark bore to him a striking resemblance, but within the last year or two there has been much alteration in the person of the editor of the "Knickerbocker." He is now, perhaps, forty-two or three, but still good-looking. His forehead is, phrenologically, bad—round and what is termed "bullety." The mouth, however, is much better, although the smile is too constant and lacks expression; the teeth are white and regular. His hair and whiskers are dark, the latter meeting voluminously beneath the chin. In height Mr. C. is about five feet ten or eleven, and in the street might be regarded as quite a "personable man"; in society I have never had the pleasure of meeting him. He is married, I believe.

ANNE C. LYNCH

MISS ANNE CHARLOTTE LYNCH has written little;—her compositions are even too few to be collected in volume form. Her prose had been, for the most part, anonymous—critical papers in "The New York Mirror" and elsewhere, with unacknowledged contributions to the annuals, especially "The Gift," and "The Diadem," both of Philadelphia. Her "Diary of a Recluse," published in the former work, is, perhaps, the best specimen of her prose manner and ability. I remember, also, a fair *critique* on Fanny Kemble's poems;—this appeared in "The Democratic Review."

In poetry, however, she has done better, and given evidence of at least unusual talent. Some of her compositions in this way are of merit, and one or two of excellence. In the former class I place her "Bones in the Desert," published in "The Opal" for 1846, her "Farewell to Ole Bull," first printed in "The Tribune," and one or two of her sonnets—not forgetting some graceful and touching lines on the death of Mrs. Willis. In the latter class I place two noble poems, "The Ideal" and "The Ideal Found." These should be considered as one, for each is by itself imperfect. In modulation and vigor of rhythm, in dignity and elevation of sentiment, in metaphorical appositeness and accuracy, and in energy of expression, I really do not know where to point out anything American much superior to them. Their ideality is not so manifest as their passions, but I think it an unusual indication of taste in Miss

Lynch, or (more strictly) of an intuitive sense of poetry's true nature, that this passion is just sufficiently subdued to lie within the compass of the poetic art, within the limits of the beautiful. A step farther and it might have passed them. *Mere* passion, however exciting, prosaically excites; it is in its very essence homely, and delights in homeliness: but the *triumph over* passion, as so finely depicted in the two poems mentioned, is one of the purest and most idealizing manifestations of moral beauty.

In character Miss Lynch is enthusiastic, chivalric, self-sacrificing, "equal to any fate," capable of even martyrdom in whatever should seem to her a holy cause—a most exemplary daughter. She has her hobbies, however, (of which a very indefinite idea of "duty" is one,) and is, of course, readily imposed upon by any artful person who perceives and takes advantage of this most amiable failing.

In person she is rather above the usual height, somewhat slender, with dark hair and eyes—the whole countenance at times full of intelligent expression. Her demeanor is dignified, graceful, and noticeable for respose. She goes much into literary society.

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN

MR. CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN has been long known to the public as an author. He commenced his literary career (as is usually the case in America) by writing for the newspapers—for "The New York American" especially, in the editorial conduct of which he became in some manner associated, at a very early age, with Mr. Charles King. His first *book*, I believe, was a collection (entitled "A Winter in the West") of letters published in "The American" during a tour made by their author through the "far West." This work appeared in 1834, went through several editions, was reprinted in London, was very popular, and deserved its popularity. It conveys the *natural* enthusiasm of a true *idealist*, in the proper phrenological sense, of one sensitively alive to beauty in every development. Its scenic descriptions are vivid, because fresh, genuine, unforced. There is nothing of the cant of the tourist for the sake not of nature but of *tourism*. The author writes *what* he feels, and, clearly, *because* he feels it. The style, as well as that of all Mr. Hoffman's books, is easy, free from superfluities, and, although abundant in *broad* phrases, still sigularly refined, gentlemanly. This ability to speak boldly without blackguardism, to use the tools of the rabble when necessary without soiling or roughening the hands with their employment, is a rare and unerring test of the natural in contradistinction from the artificial aristocrat.

Mr. H.'s next work was "Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie," very similar to the preceding, but more diversified with anecdote and interspersed with poetry. "Greyslaer" followed, a romance based on the well known murder of Sharp, the Solicitor-General of Kentucky, by Beauchampe. W. Gilmore Simms, (who has far more power, more passion, more movement, more skill than Mr. Hoffman) has treated the same subject more effectively in his novel "Beauchampe," but the fact is that both gentlemen have positively failed, as might have been expected. That both books are interesting is no merit either of Mr. H. or of Mr. S. The real events were more impressive than are the fictitious ones. The *facts* of this remarkable tragedy, as arranged by actual circumstance, would put to shame the skill of the most consummate artist. Nothing was left to the novelist but the amplification of *character*, and at this point neither the author of "Greyslaer" nor of "Beauchampe" is especially *au fait*. The incidents might be better woven into a tragedy.

In the way of poetry, Mr. Hoffman has also written a good deal. "The Vigil of Faith and other Poems" is the title of a volume published several years ago. The subject of the leading poem is happy—whether originally conceived by Mr. H. or based on an actual superstition, I cannot say. Two Indian chiefs are rivals in love. The accepted lover is about to be made happy, when his betrothed is murdered by the discarded suitor. The revenge taken is the careful *preservation* of the life of the assassin, under the idea that the meeting the maiden in another world is the point most desired by both the survivors. The incidents interwoven are picturesque, and there are many quotable passages; the descriptive portions are particularly

good; but the author has erred, first, in narrating the story in the first person, and secondly, in putting into the mouth of the narrator language and sentiments above the nature of an Indian. I say that the narration should not have been in the first person, because, although an Indian may and does fully experience a thousand delicate shades of sentiment, (the whole idea of the story is essentially sentimental,) still he has, clearly, no capacity for their various *expression*. Mr. Hoffman's hero is made to discourse very much after the manner of Rousseau. Nevertheless, "The Vigil of Faith" is, upon the whole, one of our most meritorious poems. The shorter pieces in the collection have been more popular; one or two of the *songs* particularly so—"Sparkling and Bright," for example, which is admirably adapted to song purposes, and is full of lyric feelings. It cannot be denied, however, that, in general, the whole tone, air and spirit of Mr. Hoffman's fugitive compositions are echoes of Moore. At times the very words and figures of the "British Anacreon" are unconsciously adopted. Neither can there be any doubt that this obvious similarity, if not positive imitation, is the source of the commendation bestowed upon our poet by "The Dublin University Magazine," which declares him "the best song writer in America," and does him also the honor to intimate its opinion that "he is a better fellow than the whole Yankee crew" of us taken together—after which there is very little to be said.

Whatever may be the merits of Mr. Hoffman as a poet, it may be easily seen that these merits have been put in the worst possible light by the indiscriminate and lavish approbation bestowed on them by Dr. Griswold in his "Poets and Poetry of America." The editor can find *no* blemish in Mr. H., agrees with

everything and copies everything said in his praise—worse than all, gives him more space in the book than any two, or perhaps three, of our poets combined. All this is as much an insult to Mr. Hoffman as to the public, and has done the former irreparable injury—how or why, it is of course unnecessary to say. "Heaven save us from our friends!"

Mr. Hoffman was the original editor of "The Knickerbocker Magazine," and gave it while under his control a tone and character, the weight of which may be best estimated by the consideration that the work thence received, an impetus which has sufficed to bear it on alive, although tottering, month after month, through even that dense region of unmitigated and unmitigable fog—that dreary realm of outer darkness, of utter and inconceivable dunderheadism, over which has so long ruled King Log the Second, in the august person of one Lewis Gaylord Clark. Mr. Hoffman subsequently owned and edited "The American Monthly Magazine," one of the best journals we have ever had. He also for one year conducted "The New York Mirror," and has always been a very constant contributor to the periodicals of the day.

He is the brother of Ogden Hoffman. Their father, whose family came to New York from Holland before the time of Peter Stuyvesant, was often brought into connexion or rivalry with such men as Pinckney, Hamilton and Burr.

The character of no man is more universally esteemed and admired than that of the subject of this memoir. He has a host of friends, and it is quite impossible that he should have an enemy in the world. He is chivalric to a fault, enthusiastic, frank without discourtesy, an ardent admirer of the beautiful, a gentleman of *the best* school—a gentle-

man by birth, by education and by instinct. His manners are graceful and winning in the extreme—quiet, affable and dignified, yet cordial and *dégages*. He converses much, earnestly, accurately and well. In person he is remarkably handsome. He is about five feet ten in height, somewhat stoutly made. His countenance is a noble one—a full index of the character. The features are somewhat massive but regular. The eyes are blue, or light gray, and full of fire; the mouth finely formed, although the lips have a slight expression of voluptuousness; the forehead, to my surprise although high, gives no indication, in the region of the temples, of that ideality (or love of the beautiful) which is the distinguishing trait of his moral nature. The hair curls, and is of a dark brown, interspersed with gray. He wears full whiskers. Is about forty years of age. Unmarried.

MARY E. HEWITT

I AM not aware that Mrs. Hewitt has written any prose; but her poems have been many, and occasionally excellent. A collection of them was published, in an exquisitely tasteful form, by Ticknor & Co., of Boston. The leading piece, entitled "Songs of our Land," although the longest, was by no means the most meritorious. In general, these compositions evince poetic fervor, classicism, and keen appreciation both of moral and physical beauty. No one of them, perhaps, can be judiciously commended as a whole; but no one of them is without merit, and there are several which would do credit to any poet in the land. Still, even these latter are particularly rather than generally commendable. They lack unity, totality—ultimate effect, but abound in forcible passages. For example:

> Shall I portray thee in thy glorious seeming,
> Thou that the pharos of my darkness art?...
>
> Like the blue lotos on its own clear river
> Lie thy soft eyes, beloved, upon my soul....
>
> And there the slave, a slave no more,
> Hung reverent up the chain he wore....
>
> Here 'mid your wild and dark defile
> O'erawed and wonder-whelmed I stand,
> And ask—"is this the fearful vale
> That opens on the shadowy land?"....

Oh friends! we would be treasured still,
Though Time's cold hand should cast
His misty veil, in after years,
Over the idol Past,
Yet send to us some offering thought
O'er Memory's ocean wide,
Pure as the Hindoo's votive lamp
On Ganga's sacred tide.

Mrs. Hewitt has warm partialities for the sea and all that concerns it. Many of her best poems turn upon sea adventures or have reference to a maritime life. Some portions of her "God bless the Mariner" are *naïve* and picturesque: e. g.—

God bless the happy mariner!
A homely garb wears he,
And he goeth *with a rolling gait*,
Like a ship before the sea.
He hath piped the loud "ay, ay, Sir!"
O'er the voices of the main
Till his deep tones have the hoarseness
Of the rising hurricane.

But oh, a spirit looketh
From out his clear blue eye,
With a truthful childlike earnestness,
Like an angel from the sky.

A venturous life the sailor leads
Between the sky and sea,
But, when the hour of dread is past,
A merrier who than he?

The tone of some quatrains entitled "Alone," differs materially from that usual with Mrs. Hewitt. The idea is happy and well managed.

Mrs. Hewitt's sonnets are upon the whole, her most praiseworthy compositions. One entitled "Hercules and Omphale" is noticeable for the vigor of its rhythm.

Reclined, enervate, on the couch of ease,
No more he pants for deeds of high emprize;
For Pleasure holds in soft voluptuous ties
Enthralled, great Jove-descended Hercules.
The hand that bound the Erymanthean boar,
Hesperia's dragon slew with bold intent,
That from his quivering side in triumph rent
The skin the Cleonæan lion wore,
Holds forth the goblet—while the Lydian queen,
Robed like a nymph, her brow enwreathed with vine,
Lifts high the amphora brimmed with rosy wine,
And pours the draught the crowned cup within.
And thus the soul, abased to sensual sway,
Its worth forsakes—its might forgoes for aye.

The unusual force of the line italicized, will be observed. This force arises first, from the directness, or colloquialism without vulgarity, of its expression:—(the relative pronoun "which" is very happily omitted between "skin" and "the")—and, secondly, to the musical repetition of the vowel in "Cl*e*onæan", together with the alliterative terminations in "Cleonæ*an*" and "li*on*." The effect, also, is much aided by the sonorous conclusion "wore."

Another and better instance of fine versification occurs in "Forgotten Heroes."

And the peasant mother at her door,
To the babe that climbed her knee,
Sang aloud the land's heroic songs—
Sang of Thermopylæ—
Sang of Mycale—of Marathon—
Of proud Platæa's day—
Till the wakened hills from peak to peak
Echoed the glorious lay.
Oh, godlike name!—oh, godlike deed!
Song-borne afar on every breeze,
Ye are sounds to thrill like a battle shout,
Leonidas! Miltiades!

The general intention here is a line of four iambuses alternating with a line of three; but, less

through rhythmical skill than a musical ear, the poetess has been led into some exceedingly happy variations of the theme. For example;—in place of the ordinary iambus as the first foot of the first, of the second, and of the third line, a bastard iambus has been employed. These lines are thus scanned:

And the peas | ant moth | er at | her door |
4 4 2 2 2
To the babe | that climbed | her knee |
4 4 2 2
Sang aloud | the land's | hero | ic songs |
4 4 2 2 2

The fourth line,

Sang of | Thermo | pylæ
2 2 2

is well varied by a trochee, instead of an iambus, in the first foot; and the variation expresses forcibly the enthusiasm excited by the topic of the supposed songs, "Thermopylæ." The fifth line is scanned as the first three. The sixth is the general intention, and consists simply of iambuses. The seventh is like the first three and the fifth. The eighth, is like the fourth; and here again the opening trochee is admirably adapted to the *movement* of the topic. The ninth is the general intention, and is formed of four iambuses. The tenth is an alternating line and yet has four iambuses, instead of the usual three; as has also the final line—an alternating one, too. A fuller volume is in this manner given to the close of subject; and this volume is fully in keeping with the rising enthusiasm. The last line but one has *two* bastard iambuses, thus:

Ye are sounds | to thrill | like a bat | tle shout | .
4 4 2 4 4 2

Upon the whole, it may be said that the most skilful versifier could not have written lines better

suited to the purposes of the poet. The errors of "Alone," however, and of Mrs. Hewitt's poems generally, show that we must regard the beauties pointed out above, merely in the light to which I have already alluded—that is to say, as occasional happiness to which the poetess is led by a musical ear.

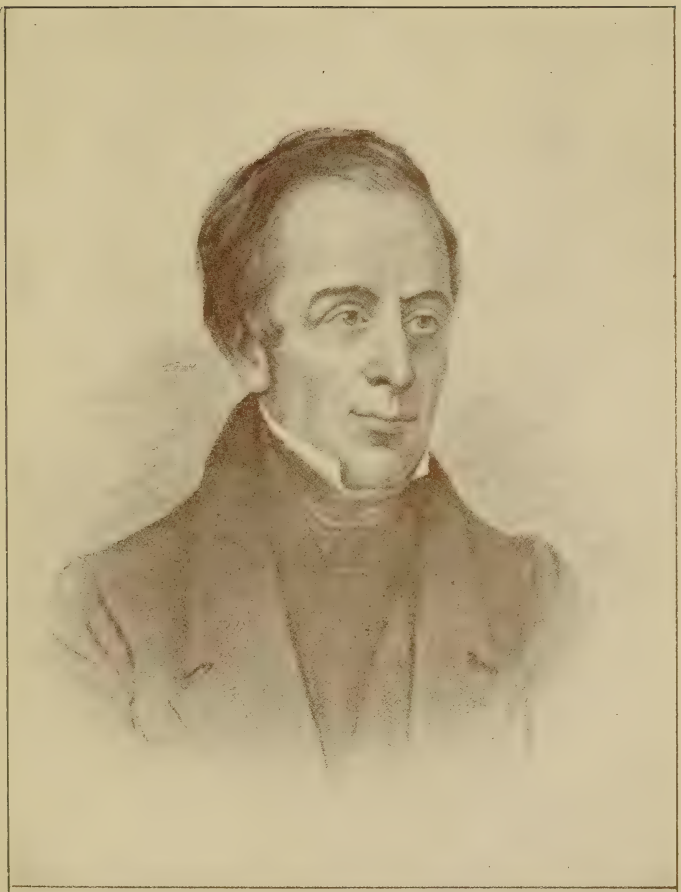
I should be doing this lady injustice were I not to mention that, at times, she rises into a higher and purer region of poetry than might be supposed, or inferred, from any of the passages which I have hitherto quoted. The conclusion of her "Ocean Tide to the Rivulet" puts me in mind of the rich spirit of Horne's noble epic, "Orion."

> Sadly the flowers their faded petals close
> Where on thy banks they languidly repose,
> Waiting in vain to hear thee onward press;
> And pale Narcissus by thy margin side
> Hath lingered for thy coming, drooped and died,
> Pining for thee amid the loneliness.
>
> Hasten, beloved!—*here! 'neath the o'erhanging rock!*
> Hark! from the deep, my anxious hope to mock,
> *They call me back unto my parent main.*
> Brighter than Thetis thou—and *ah, more fleet!*
> *I hear the rushing of thy fair white feet!*
> Joy! joy!—my breast receives its own again!

The personifications here are well managed. The "Here!—'neath the o'erhanging rock!" has the high merit of being truthfully, by which I mean *naturally*, expressed, and imparts exceeding vigor to the whole stanza. The idea of the ebb-tide, conveyed in the second line italicized, is one of the happiest imaginable; and too much praise can scarcely be bestowed on the "rushing" of the "fair white feet." The passage altogether is full of fancy, earnestness, and the truest poetic strength. Mrs. Hewitt has given many such *indications* of a fire

which, with more earnest endeavor, might be readily fanned into flame.

In character, she is sincere, fervent, benevolent—sensitive to praise and to blame; in temperament melancholy; in manner subdued; converses earnestly yet quietly. In person she is tall and slender, with black hair and full gray eyes; complexion dark; general expression of the countenance singularly interesting and agreeable.



THOMAS HOOD

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THOMAS HOOD

"FREQUENTLY since his death," says the American editor of his works, "Hood has been called a great author, a phrase used not inconsiderately or in vain," but, if we adopt the conventional idea of "a great author," there has lived, perhaps, no writer of the last half century who, with equal notoriety, was *less* entitled than Hood to the term. In fact he was a literary merchant whose principal stock-in-trade was littleness—for during the larger portion of his life he seemed to breathe only for the purpose of perpetrating puns—things of such despicable platitude that the man who is capable of habitually committing them is very seldom capable of anything else. In especial, whatever merit may accidentally be discovered in a pun, arises altogether from *unexpectedness*. This is its element, and is twofold. First, we demand that the combination of the pun be unexpected, and secondly, we demand the most entire unexpectedness in the pun *per se*. A rare pun, rarely appearing is, to a certain extent, a pleasurable effect—but to no mind, however debased in taste, is a continuous effort at punning otherwise than unendurable. The man who maintains that he derives gratification from any such chapters of punnage as Hood was in the daily habit of putting on paper has no claim to be believed upon his oath.

The continuous and premeditated puns of Hood, however, are to be regarded as the weak points of the man. Independently of their ill effect, in a

literary view, as mere puns, they leave upon us a painful impression; for too evidently they are the hypochondriac's struggles at mirth—they are the grinnings of the death's-head. No one can read his "Literary Reminiscences" without being convinced of his habitual despondency—and the species of pseudo-wit in question is precisely of that character which would be adopted by an author of Hood's temperament and cast of intellect when compelled to write at an emergency. That his heart had no interest in these *niaiseries* is clear. We allude, of course, to his *mere* puns for the puns' sake—a class of writings by which he attained his most extensive renown. That he did more in this way than any other would follow as a corollary from what we have already said—for generally he was unhappy, and almost continually he was obliged to write *invita Minerva*. But his true element was a very rare and ethereal class of *humour*, in which the *mere* pun was left altogether out of sight, or took the character of the richest *grotesquerie*, impressing the imaginative reader with very remarkable force, as if by a new phase of the ideal. It is in this species of brilliant *grotesqueries*, uttered with a rushing *abandon* which wonderfully aided its effect, that Hood's marked originality of manner consisted; and it is this which fairly entitles him at times to the epithet "great";—we say, fairly so entitles him; for *that* undeniably may be considered *great* (of whatever seeming littleness in itself) which has the capability of producing intense emotion in the minds of those who are themselves undeniably great.

When we said, however, that Hood wrought profound impressions upon imaginative men, we spoke only of what is imagination in the popular acceptance of the term. His true province—that is to say

the field in which he is distinctive—is a kind of borderland between the Fancy and the Fantasy—but in this region he reigns supreme. But when we speak of his province as a borderland between Fantasy and Fancy, of course we do not mean rigorously to confine him to this province. He has made very successful and frequent incursions into the dominions of humour (in general he has been too benevolent to be witty), and there have been one or two occasions in which he has stepped boldly into the realm of Imagination herself. We mean to say, however, that he is rarely imaginative for more than a paragraph at a time. In a word, the genius of Hood is the result of vivid fancy impelled or controlled, certainly tinctured at all points, by hypochondriasis. In his wild "Ode to Melancholy" we perceive this result in the very clearest of manifestations. Few things have ever more deeply affected us than the passages which follow:—

O clasp me, sweet, whilst thou art mine,
And do not take my tears amiss;
For tears must flow to wash away
A thought that shows so stern as this:
Forgive, if somewhile I forget,
In woe to come, the present bliss,
As frighted Proserpine let fall
Her flowers at the sight of Dis,
Ev'n so the dark and bright will kiss.
The sunniest things throw sternest shade,
And there is ev'n a happiness
That makes the heart afraid!

All things are touch'd with melancholy
Born of the secret soul's mistrust,
To feel her fair ethereal wings
Weigh down with vile degraded dust
Even the bright extremes of joy
Bring on conclusions of disgust,

Like the sweet blossoms of the May
Whose fragrance ends in must.
O give her, then, her tribute just,
Her sighs and tears, and musings holy
There is no music in the life
That sounds with idiot laughter solely;
There's not a string attuned to mirth,
But has its chords of melancholy."

"The Dream of Eugene Aram," is too well known in America to need comment from us. It has more of true imagination than almost any other composition of its author—but even when engaged on so serious a subject, he found great difficulty in keeping aloof from the grotesque—the result (we say) of warm fancy impelled by hypochondriasis. The opening stanza affords an example:

" 'Twas in the prime of summer time,
An evening calm and cool,
When four-and-twenty happy boys
Came bounding out of school;
There were some that ran, *and some that leapt*
Like troutlets in a pool."

The twenty-fourth stanza approaches more nearly the imaginative spirit than any passage in the poem, but the taint of the fantastical is over it still:

And peace went with them one and all
And each calm pillow spread;
But guilt was my grim chamberlain,
That lighted me to bed;
And drew my midnight curtains round,
With fingers bloody red!"

"Fair Ines," is so beautiful that we shall purloin it in full, although we have no doubt that it is familiar to our readers.* "Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg," is, perhaps, more thoroughly charac-

*And for this reason it is now omitted.—*Ed.*

teristic of Hood's genius than any single thing which he has written. It is quite a long poem—comprising nearly three thousand lines—and its author has evidently laboured much with it. Its chief defect is in its versification; for this Hood had no ear—of its principles he knew nothing at all. Not that his verses, individually, are very lame, but that they have no capacity for running together. The reader is continually getting baulked, not because the lines are unreadable, but because the lapse from one rhythm to another is so inartistically managed.

The story concerns a very rich heiress who is excessively pampered by her parents, and who at length gets thrown from a horse and so injures a leg as to render amputation inevitable. To supply the place of the true limb, she insists upon a leg of solid gold—a leg of the exact proportions of the original. She puts up with its inconvenience for the sake of the admiration it excites. Its attraction, however, excites the cupidity of a *chevalier d'industrie*, who cajoles her into wedlock, dissipates her fortune, and finally, purloining her golden leg, dashes out her brains with it, elopes, and puts an end to the story. It is wonderfully well told, and abounds in the most brilliant points—embracing something of each of the elementary faculties which we have been discussing—but most especially rich in that which we have termed *Fantasy*.

The most remarkable poems, however, are those which we have still to speak of. They convey, too, most distinctly the genius of the author—nor can any one thoughtfully read them without a conviction that hitherto that genius has been greatly misconceived—without perceiving that even the wit of Hood had its birth in a tint of melancholy perhaps hereditary—and nearly amounting to monomania.

"The Song of the Shirt" is such a composition as only Hood could have conceived or written. Its popularity has been unbounded. Its effect arises from that *grotesquerie* which we have referred to the vivid fancy of the author, impelled by hypochondriasis; but "The Song of the Shirt" has scarcely a claim to the title of *poem*. This, however, is a mere question of words, and can by no means affect the high merit of the composition, to whatever appellation it may be considered entitled.

"The Bridge of Sighs," on the contrary, is a poem of the loftiest order, and, with one exception, the finest written by Hood—being very far superior to "The Dream of Eugene Aram." Not its least merit is the effective rush and whirl of its singular versification—so thoroughly in accordance with the wild insanity which is the thesis of the whole.

"The Haunted House" we prefer to any composition of its author. It is a masterpiece of its kind—and that kind belongs to a very lofty—if not to the very loftiest order of poetical literature. Had we seen this piece before penning our first notice of Hood* we should have had much hesitation in speaking of Fancy and Fantasy as his predominant features. At all events we should have given him credit for much more of true imagination than we did. Not the least merit of the work is its rigorous simplicity. There is no narrative, and no doggerel philosophy. The whole subject is the description of a deserted house which the popular superstition considered haunted. The thesis in one of the truest in all poetry. *As* a mere thesis it is really difficult to conceive anything better. The strength of the poet is put forth in the invention of traits in keeping with the ideas of crime, abandonment, and

*This Review of Hood's Poems appeared in two parts.

ghostly visitation. Every legitimate art is brought in to aid in conveying the intended effects; and (what is quite remarkable in the case of Hood) nothing discordant is at any point introduced. He has here very little of what we have designated as the fantastic—little which is not strictly harmonious. The metre and rhythm are not only in themselves admirably adapted to the whole design, but, with a true artistic feeling, the poet has preserved a thorough monotone throughout, and renders its effect more impressive by the repetition (gradually increasing in frequency towards the *finale*) of one of the most pregnant and effective of the stanzas:

> "O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear,
> And a sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper in the ear
> The place is haunted!"

Had Hood only written "The Haunted House" it would have sufficed to render him immortal.

RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE

ABOUT twelve years ago, I think, "The New York Sun," a daily paper, price one penny, was established in the city of New York by Mr. Moses Y. Beach, who engaged Mr. Richard Adams Locke as its editor. In a well-written prospectus, the object of the journal professed to be that of "supplying the public with the news of the day at so cheap a rate as to lie within the means of all." The consequences of the scheme, in their influence on the whole newspaper business of the country, and through this business on the interests of the country at large, are probably beyond all calculation.

Previous to "The Sun," there had been an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a penny paper in New York, and "The Sun" itself was originally projected and for a short time issued by Messrs. Day & Wisner; its *establishment*, however, is altogether due to Mr. Beach, who purchased it of its disheartened originators. The first decided *movement* of the journal, nevertheless, is to be attributed to Mr. Locke; and in so saying, I by no means intend any depreciation of Mr. Beach, since in the engagement of Mr. L. he had but given one of the earliest instances of that unusual sagacity for which I am inclined to yield him credit.

At all events, "The Sun" was revolving in a comparatively narrow orbit when, one fine day, there appeared in its editorial columns a prefatory article announcing very remarkable astronomical

discoveries made at the Cape of Good Hope by Sir John Herschell. The information was said to have been received by "The Sun" from an early copy of "The Edinburgh Journal of Science," in which appeared a communication from Sir John himself. This preparatory announcement took very well, (there had been no hoaxes in those days,) and was followed by full details of the reputed discoveries, which were now found to have been made chiefly in respect to the moon, and by means of a telescope to which the one lately constructed by the Earl of Rosse is a plaything. As these discoveries were gradually spread before the public, the astonishment of that public grew out of all bounds; but those who questioned the veracity of "The Sun"—the authenticity of the communication to "The Edinburgh Journal of Science"—were really very few indeed; and this I am forced to look upon as a far more wonderful thing than any "man-bat" of them all.

About six months before this occurrence, the Harpers had issued an American edition of Sir John Herschell's "Treatise on Astronomy," and I have been much interested in what is there said respecting the possibility of future lunar investigations. The theme excited my fancy, and I longed to give free rein to it in depicting my day-dreams about the scenery of the moon—in short, I longed to write a story embodying these dreams. The obvious difficulty, of course, was that of accounting for the narrator's acquaintance with the satellite; and the equally obvious mode of surmounting the difficulty was the supposition of an extraordinary telescope. I saw at once that the chief interest of such a narrative must depend upon the reader's yielding his credence in some measure as to details of actual fact.

At this stage of my deliberations, I spoke of the design to one or two friends—to Mr. John P. Kennedy, the author of "Swallow Barn," among others —and the result of my conversations with them was that the optical difficulties of constructing such a telescope as I conceived were so rigid and so commonly understood, that it would be in vain to attempt giving due verisimilitude to any fiction having the telescope as a basis. Reluctantly, therefore, and only half convinced, (believing the public, in fact, more readily gullible than did my friends,) I gave up the idea of imparting very close verisimilitude to what I should write—that is to say, so close as really to deceive. I fell back upon a style half plausible, half bantering, and resolved to give what interest I could to an actual passage from the earth to the moon, describing the lunar scenery as if surveyed and personally examined by the narrator. In this view I wrote a story which I called "Hans Pfaall," publishing it about six months afterwards in "The Southern Literary Messenger," of which I was then editor.

It was three weeks after the issue of "The Messenger" containing "Hans Pfaall," that the first of the "Moon-hoax" editorials made its appearance in "The Sun," and no sooner had I seen the paper than I understood the jest, which not for a moment could I doubt had been suggested by my own *jeu d'esprit*. Some of the New York journals ("The Transcript" among others) saw the matter in the same light, and published the "Moon story" side by side with "Hans Pfaall," thinking that the author of the one had been detected in the author of the other. Although the details are, with some exceptions, very dissimilar, still I maintain that the general features of the two compositions

are nearly identical. Both are *hoaxes*, (although one is in a *tone* of mere banter, the other of downright earnest;) both hoaxes are on one subject, astronomy; both on the same point of that subject, the moon; both professed to have derived exclusive information from a foreign country, and both attempt to give plausibility by minuteness of scientific detail. Add to all this, that nothing of a similar nature had ever been attempted before these two hoaxes, the one of which followed immediately upon the heels of the other.

Having stated the case, however, in this form, I am bound to do Mr. Locke the justice to say that he denies having seen my article prior to the publication of his own; I am bound to add, also, that I believe him.

Immediately on the completion of the "Moon story," (it was three or four days in getting finished,) I wrote an examination of its claims to credit. showing distinctly its fictitious character, but was astonished at finding that I could obtain few listeners, so really eager were all to be deceived, so magical were the charms of a style that served as the vehicle of an exceedingly clumsy invention.

It may afford even now some amusement to see pointed out those particulars of the hoax which should have sufficed to establish its real character. Indeed, however rich the imagination displayed in this fiction, it wanted much of the force which might have been given it by a more scrupulous attention to general analogy and to fact. That the public were misled, even for an instant, merely proves the gross ignorance which (ten or twelve years ago) was so prevalent on astronomical topics.

The moon's distance from the earth is, in round numbers, 240,000 miles. If we wish to ascertain

how near, apparently, a lens would bring the satellite, (or any distant object,) we, of course, have but to divide the distance by the magnifying, or, more strictly, by the space-penetrating power of the glass. Mr. Locke gives his lens a power of 42,000 times. By this divide 240,000, (the moon's real distance,) and we have five miles and five-sevenths as the apparent distance. No animal could be seen so far, much less the minute points particularized in the story. Mr. L. speaks about Sir John Herschell's perceiving flowers, (the *papaver Rheas*, etc.,) and even detecting the color and the shape of the eyes of small birds. Shortly before, too, the author himself observes that the lens would not render perceptible objects less than eighteen inches in diameter; but even this, as I have said, is giving the glass far too great a power.

On page 18, (of the pamphlet edition,) speaking of "a hairy veil" over the eyes of a species of bison, Mr. L. says—"It immediately occurred to the acute mind of Doctor Herschell that this was a providential contrivance to protect the eyes of the animal from the great extremes of light and darkness to which all the inhabitants of our side of the moon are periodically subjected." But this should not be thought a very "acute"observation of the Doctor's. The inhabitants of our side of the moon have, evidently, no darkness at all; in the absence of the sun they have a light from the earth equal to that of thirteen full moons, so that there can be nothing of the extremes mentioned.

The topography throughout, even when professing to accord with Blunt's Lunar Chart, is at variance with that and all other lunar charts, and even at variance with itself. The points of the compass, too, are in sad confusion; the writer seeming to be un-

aware that, on a lunar map, these are not in accordance with terrestial points—the east being to the left, and so forth.

Deceived, perhaps, by the vague titles *Mare Nubium*, *Mare Tranquilitatis*, *Mare Fœcunditatis*, etc., given by astronomers of former times to the dark patches on the moon's surface, Mr. L. has long details respecting oceans and other large bodies of water in the moon; whereas there is no astronomical point more positively ascertained than that no such bodies exist there. In examining the boundary between light and darkness in a crescent or gibbous moon, where this boundary crosses any of the dark places, the line of division is found to be jagged; but were these dark places liquid, they would evidently be even.

The description of the wings of the man-bat (on page 21) is but a literal copy of Peter Wilkins' account of the wings of his flying islanders. This simple fact should at least have induced suspicion.

On page 23 we read thus—"What a prodigious influence must our thirteen times larger globe have exercised upon this satellite when an embryo in the womb of time, the passive subject of chemical affinity!" Now, this is very fine; but it should be observed that no astronomer could have made such remark, especially to any "Journal of Science," for the earth in the sense intended (that of bulk) is not only thirteen but forty-nine times *larger* than the moon. A similar objection applies to the five or six concluding pages of the pamphlet, where, by way of introduction to some discoveries in Saturn, the philosophical correspondent is made to give a minute schoolboy account of that planet—an account quite supererogatory, it might be presumed, in the case of "The Edinburgh Journal of Science."

But there is one point, in especial, which should have instantly betrayed the fiction. Let us imagine the power really possessed of seeing animals on the moon's surface—what in such case would first arrest the attention of an observer from the earth? Certainly neither the shape, size, nor any other peculiarity in these animals so soon as their remarkable *position*—they would seem to be walking heels up and head down. after the fashion of flies on a ceiling, The real observer (however prepared by previous knowledge) would have commented on this odd phenomenon before proceeding to other details; the fictitious observer has not even alluded to the subject but in the case of the man-bats speaks of seeing their entire bodies, when it is demonstrable that he could have seen little more than the apparently flat hemisphere of the head.

I may as well observe, in conclusion, that the size, and especially the powers of the man-bats, (for example, their ability to fly in so rare an atmosphere—if, indeed, the moon has any,) with most of the other fancies in regard to animal and vegetable existence, are at variance generally with all analogical reasoning on these themes, and that analogy here will often amount to the most positive demonstration. The temperature of the moon, for instance, is rather above that of boiling water, and Mr. Locke, consequently, has committed a serious oversight in not representing his man-bats, his bisons, his game of all kinds—to say nothing of his vegetables—as each and all done to a turn.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add, that all the suggestions attributed to Brewster and Herschell in the beginning of the hoax, about the "transfusion of artificial light through the focal object of vision," etc., etc., belong to that species of figur-

ative writing which comes most properly under the head of rigmarole. There is a real and very definite limit to optical discovery among the stars. a limit whose nature need only be stated to be understood. If, indeed, the casting of large lenses were all that is required, the ingenuity of man would ultimately prove equal to the task, and we might have them of any size demanded;* but, unhappily, in proportion to the increase of size in the lens, and consequently of space-penetrating power, is the diminution of light from the object by diffusion of the rays. And for this evil there is no remedy within human reach; for an object is seen by means of that light alone, whether direct or reflected, which proceeds from the object itself. Thus the only artificial light which could avail Mr. Locke, would be such as he should be able to throw, not upon "the focal object of vision," but upon *the moon*. It has been easily calculated that when the light proceeding from a heavenly body becomes so diffused as to be as weak as the natural light given out by the stars collectively in a clear, moonless night, then the heavenly body for any practical purpose is no longer visible.

The singular blunders to which I have referred being properly understood, we shall have all the better reason for wonder at the prodigious *success* of the hoax. Not one person in ten discredited it, and (strangest point of all!) the doubters were chiefly those who doubted without being able to say why—the ignorant, those uninformed in astronomy, people who *would not* believe because the thing was so novel,

*Neither of the Herschells dreamed of the possibility of a speculum six feet in diameter, and now the marvel has been triumphantly accomplished by Lord Rosse. There is, in fact, no physical *impossibility* in our casting lenses of even fifty feet diameter or more. A sufficiency of means and *skill* is all that is demanded.

so entirely "out of the usual way." A grave professor of mathematics in a Virginian college told me seriously that he had *no doubt* of the truth of the whole affair! The great effect wrought upon the public mind is referable, first, to *the novelty of the idea;* secondly, to the fancy-exciting and reason-repressing character of the alleged discoveries; thirdly, to the consummate tact with which the deception was brought forth; fourthly, to the exquisite *vraisemblance* of the narration. The hoax was circulated to an immense extent, was translated into various languages—was even made the subject of (quizzical) discussion in astronomical societies; drew down upon itself the grave denunciation of Dick, and was, upon the whole, decidedly the greatest *hit* in the way of *sensation*—of merely popular sensation—ever made by any similiar fiction either in America or in Europe.

Having read the Moon story to an end, and found it anticipative of all the main points of my "Hans Pfaall," I suffered the latter to remain unfinished. The chief design in carrying my hero to the moon was to afford him an opportunity of describing the lunar scenery, but I found that he could add very little to the minute and authentic account of Sir John Herschell. The first part of "Hans Pfaall," occupying about eighteen pages of "The Messenger," embraced merely a journal of the passage between the two orbs, and a few words of general observation on the most obvious features of the satellite; the second part will most probably never appear. I did not think it advisable even to bring my voyager back to his parent earth. He remains where I left him, and is still, I believe, "the man in the moon."

From the epoch of the hoax "The Sun" shone with unmitigated splendor. The start thus given

the paper insured it a triumph; it has now a daily circulation of not far from fifty thousand copies, and is, therefore, probably, the most really influential journal of its kind in the world. Its success firmly established "the penny system" throughout the country, and (*through* "The Sun") consequently, we are indebted to the genius of Mr. Locke for one of the most important steps ever yet taken in the pathway of human progress.

On dissolving, about a year afterwards, his connexion with Mr. Beach, Mr. Locke established a political daily paper, "The New Era," conducting it with distinguished ability. In this journal he made, very unwisely, an attempt at a second hoax, giving the *finale* of the adventures of Mungo Park in Africa —the writer pretending to have come into possession, by some accident, of the lost MSS. of the traveller. No one, however, seemed to be deceived, (Mr. Locke's columns were a suspected district,) and the adventures were never brought to an end. They were richly imaginative.

The next point made by their author was the getting up a book on magnetism as the *premum mobile* of the universe, in connexion with Doctor Sherwood, the practitioner of magnetic remedies. The more immediate purpose of the treatise was the setting forth a new magnetic method of obtaining the longitude. The matter was brought before Congress and received with favorable attention. What definite action was had I know not. A review of the work appeared in "The Army and Navy Chronicle," and made sad havoc of the whole project. It was enabled to do this, however, by attacking in detail the accuracy of some calculations of no very radical importance. These and others Mr. Locke is now engaged in carefully revising; and my

own opinion is that his theory (which he has reached more by dint of imagination than of anything else) will finally be established, although, perhaps, never thoroughly by *him*.

His prose style is noticeable for its concision, luminousness, completeness—each quality in its proper place. He has that *method* so generally characteristic of genius proper. Everything he writes is a model in its peculiar way, serving just the purposes intended and nothing to spare. He has written some poetry, which, through certain radical misapprehensions, is not very good.

Like most men of *true* imagination, Mr. Locke is a seemingly paradoxical compound of coolness and excitability.

He is about five feet seven inches in height, symmetrically formed; there is an air of distinction about his whole person—the *air noble* of genius. His face is strongly pitted by the small-pox, and, perhaps from the same cause, there is a marked obliquity in the eyes; a certain calm, clear *luminousness*, however, about these latter, amply compensates for the defect, and the forehead is truly beautiful in its intellectuality. I am acquainted with no person possessing so fine a forehead as Mr. Locke. He is married, and about forty-five years of age, although no one would suppose him to be more than thirty-eight. He is a lineal descendant from the immortal author of the "Essay on the Human Understanding."

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH*

THIS is a very pretty little volume, neatly printed, handsomely bound, embracing some two hundred pages sixteen-mo. and introduced to the public, somewhat unnecessarily, in a preface by Dr. Rufus W. Griswold. In this preface we find some few memoranda of the personal authoress, with some critical opinions in relation to her poems. The memoranda are meagre. A much more interesting account of Mrs. Smith is given by Mr. John Neal, and was included by Mr. John Keese in the introduction to a former collection of her works. The critical opinions may as well be here quoted, at least in part. Dr. Griswold says:

Seeking expression, yet shrinking from notoriety, and with a full share of that respect for a just fame and appreciation which belongs to every high-toned mind, yet oppressed by its shadow when circumstance is the impelling motive of publication, the writings of Mrs. Smith might well be supposed to betray great inequality; still in her many contributions to the magazines, it is remarkable how few of her pieces display the usual carelessness and haste of magazine articles. As an essayist especially, while graceful and lively, she is compact and vigorous; while through poems, essays, tales, and criticisms, (for her industrious pen seems quite equally skilful and happy in each of these departments of literature,) through all her manifold writings, indeed, there runs the same beautiful vein of philosophy, viz.:—that truth and goodness of themselves impart a holy light to the mind which gives it a power far above mere intellectuality; that the highest order of human

*The Poetical writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith. First complete edition. New York. J. S. Redfield.

intelligence springs from the moral and not the reasoning faculties . . . . . Mrs. Smith's most popular poem is "The Acorn," which, though inferior in high inspiration to "The Sinless Child," is by many preferred for its happy play of fancy and proper finish. Her sonnets, of which she has written many, have not yet been as much admired as the "April Rain," "The Brook," and other fugitive pieces, which we find in many popular collections.

"The Sinless Child" was originally published in the "Southern Literary Messenger," where it at once attracted much attention from the novelty of its conception and the general grace and purity of its style. Undoubtedly it is one of the most original of American poems—surpassed in this respect, we think, only by Maria del Occidente's "Bride of Seven." Of course, we speak merely of long poems. We have had in this country many brief fugitive pieces far excelling in this most important point (originality) either "The Bride of Seven" or "The Sinless Child" —far excelling, indeed, any transatlantic poems. After all, it is chiefly in works of what is absurdly termed "sustained effort" that we fall in any material respect behind our progenitors.

"The Sinless Child" is quite long, including more than two hundred stanzas, generally of eight lines. The metre throughout is iambic tetrameter, alternating with trimeter—in other words, lines of four iambuses alternate with lines of three. The variations from this order are rare. The design of the poem is very imperfectly made out. The conception is much better than the execution. "A simple cottage maiden, Eva, given to the world in the widowhood of one parent and the angelic existence of the other . . . . . is found from her birth to be as meek and gentle as are those pale flowers that look imploringly upon us . . . . She is gifted with the

power of interpreting the beautiful mysteries of our earth . . . . . For her the song of the bird is not merely the gushing forth of a nature too full of blessedness to be silent . . . . the humblest plant, the simplest insect, is each alive with truth . . . . . She sees the world not merely with mortal eyes, but looks within to the pure internal life of which the outward is but a type," etc., etc. These passages are taken from the Argument prefixed to Part I. The general thesis of the poetess may, perhaps, be stated as the demonstration that the superior wisdom is moral rather than intellectual; but it may be doubted whether her subject was ever precisely apparent to herself. In a word, she seems to have vacillated between several conceptions—the only very definite idea being that of extreme beauty and purity in a child. At one time we fancy her, for example, attempting to show that the condition of absolute sanctity is one through which mortality may know all things and hold converse with the angels; at another we suppose it her purpose to "create" (in critical language) an entirely novel being, a something that is neither angel nor mortal, nor yet fairy in the ordinary sense—in a word, an original *ens*. Besides these two prominent fancies, however, there are various others which seem continually flitting in and out of the poet's vision, so that her whole work has an indeterminate air. Of this she apparently becomes conscious towards the conclusion, and in the final stanza endeavors to remedy the difficulty by summing up her design—

> The sinless child, with mission high,
> Awhile to earth was given,
> To show us that our world should be
> The vestibule of heaven,

Did we but in the holy light
Of truth and goodness rise,
We might communion hold with God
And spirits from the skies.

The conduct of the narrative is scarcely more determinate—if, indeed, "The Sinless Child" can be said to include a narrative at all. The poem is occupied in its first part with a description of the child, her saintly character, her lone wanderings, the lessons she deduces from all animal and vegetable things, and her communings with the angels. We have then discussions with her mother, who is made to introduce episodical tales, one of "Old Richard," another called "The Defrauded Heart," (a tale of a miser,) and another entitled "The Stepmother." Towards the end of the poem a lover, Alfred Linne, is brought upon the scene. He has been reckless and sinful, but is reclaimed by the heavenly nature of Eva. He finds her sleeping in a forest. At this point occur some of the finest and most characteristic passages of the poem.

Unwonted thought, unwonted calm
Upon his spirit fell;
For he unwittingly had sought
Young Eva's hallowed dell,
And breathed that atmosphere of love,
Around her path that grew:
That evil from her steps repelled
The good unto her drew.

Mem.—The last quatrain of this stanza would have been readily comprehended if punctuated and written thus—

And breathed that atmosphere of love
Around her path that grew—
That evil from her steps repelled—
That good unto her drew.

We may as well observe here, too, that although neatly printed, the volume abounds in typographical errors that very frequently mar the sense—as at page 66, for example, where *come* (near the bottom) is improperly used for *came*, and *scortching* (second line from the top) is substituted for *searching*. We proceed with Alfred's discovery of Eva in the wood.

> Now Eva opes her child-like eyes
> And lifts her tranquil head;
> And Albert, like a guilty thing,
> Had from her presence fled.
> But Eva marked his troubled brow,
> His sad and thoughtful eyes,
> As if they sought yet shrank to hold
> Their converse with the skies.

Communion with the skies—would have been far better. It seems strange to us that any one should have overlooked the word.

> And all her kindly nature stirred,
> She prayed him to remain;
> Well conscious that the pure have power
> To balm much human pain.
> There mingled too, as in a dream,
> About brave Albert Linne,
> A real and ideal form
> Her soul had formed within.

We give the punctuation here as we find it;—it is incorrect throughout, interfering materially with a proper understanding of the passage. There should be a comma after "And" in the first line, a comma in place of the semicolon at the end of the second line, no point at the end of the third line, a comma after "mingled," and none after "form." These seeming *minutiæ* are of real importance; but we refer to them, in case of "The Sinless Child," because here the

aggregate of this species of minor eror is unusually remarkable. Of course it is the proof-reader or editor, and not Mrs. Smith, who is to blame.

Her trusting hand fair Eva laid
In that of Albert Linne,
And for one trembling moment turned
Her gentle thoughts within.
Deep tenderness was in the glance
That rested on his face,
As if her woman-heart had found
Its own abiding-place.

And evermore to him it seemed
Her voice more liquid grew—
"Dear youth, thy soul and mine are one:
One source their being drew!
And they must mingle evermore—
Thy thoughts of love and me
Will, as a light, thy footsteps guide
To life and mystery."

There was a sadness in her tone,
But love unfathomed deep;
As from the centre of the soul
Where the divine may sleep;
Prophetic was the tone and look,
And Albert's noble heart
Sank with a strange foreboding dread
Lest Eva should depart.

And when she bent her timid eyes
As she beside him knelt,
The pressure of her sinless lips
Upon his brow he felt,
And all of earth and all of sin
Fled from her sainted side;
She, the pure virgin of the soul,
Ordained young Albert's bride.

It would, perhaps, have been out of keeping with the more obvious plan of the poem to make Eva

really the bride of Albert. She does not wed him, but dies tranquilly in bed, soon after the spiritual union in the forest. "Eva," says the Argument of Part VII, "hath fulfilled her destiny. Material thing can no farther minister to the growth of her spirit. That waking of the soul to its own deep mysteries—its oneness with another—has been accomplished. A human soul is perfected." At this point the poem may be said to have its conclusion.

In looking back at its general plan, we cannot fail to see traces of high poetic capacity. The first point to be commended is the reach or aim of the poetess. She is evidently discontented with the bald routine of common-place themes, and originality has been with her a principal object. In *all* cases of fictitious composition it should be the *first* object—by which we do not mean to say that it can ever be considered as the most important. But, *certeris paribus*, every class of fiction is the better for originality; every writer is false to his own interest if he fails to avail himself, at the outset, of the effect which is certainly and invariably derivable from the great element, *novelty*.

The execution of "The Sinless Child" is, as we have already said, inferior to its conception—that is, to its conception as it floated, rather than steadily existed, in the brain of the authoress. She enables us to see that she has very *narrowly missed* one of those happy "creations" which now and then immortalize the poet. With a good deal more of deliberate thought before putting pen to paper, with a good deal more of the constructive ability, and with more rigorous discipline in the minor merits of style, and of what is termed in the school-prospectuses, composition, Mrs. Smith would have made of "The Sinless Child" one of the best, if not the very best of American poems.

While speaking of the execution, or, more properly, the conduct of the work, we may as well mention, first, the obviousness with which the stories introduced by Eva's mother are interpolated, or episodical; it is permitted every reader to see that they have no natural connexion with the true theme; and, indeed, there can be no doubt that they were written long before the main narrative was projected. In the second place, we must allude to the artificiality of the *Arguments*, or introductory prose passages, prefacing each Part of the poem. Mrs. Smith had no sounder reason for employing them than Milton and the rest of the epicists have employed them before. If it be said that they are necessary for the proper comprehension of a poem, we reply that this is saying nothing for *them*, but merely much against the poem which demands them as a necessity. Every work of art should contain within itself all that is required for its own comprehension. An "argument" is but another form of the "This is an ox" subjoined to the portrait of an animal with horns. But in making these objections to the management of "The Sinless Child," we must not be understood as insisting upon them as at all material, in view of the lofty merit of originality—a merit which pervades and invigorates the whole work, and which, in our opinion, at least, is far, very far more than sufficient to compensate for every inartisticality of construction. A work of art may be admirably constructed, and yet be null as regards every essentiality of that truest art which is but the happiest development of nature; but no work of art can embody within itself a proper *originality* without giving the plainest manifestations of the creative spirit, or, in more common parlance, of *genius* in its author. The originality of "The Sinless Child" would cover a multitude of greater defects

than Mrs. Smith ever committed, and must forever entitle it to the admiration and respect of every competent critic.

As regards detached passages, we think that the episode of "The Stepmother" may be fairly cited as the best in the poem.

You speak of Hobert's second wife, a lofty dame and bold;
I like not her forbidding air, and forehead high and cold.
The orphans have no cause for grief; she dare not give it now,
Though nothing but a ghostly fear her heart of pride could bow.

One night the boy his mother called; they heard him weeping say,
"Sweet mother, kiss poor Eddy's cheek and wipe his tears away."
Red grew the lady's brow with rage, and yet she feels a strife
Of anger and of terror, too, at thought of that dead wife.

Wild roars the wind; the lights burn blue; the watch-dog howls with fear;
Loud neighs the steed from out the stall. What form is gliding near?
No latch is raised, no step is heard, but a phantom fills the space—
A sheeted spectre from the dead, with cold and leaden face.

What boots it that no other eye beheld the shade appear?
The guilty lady's guilty soul beheld it plain and clear.
It slowly glides within the room and sadly looks around,
And, stooping, kissed her daughter's cheek with lips that gave no sound.

Then softly on the step-dame's arm she laid a death-cold hand,
Yet it hath scorched within the flesh like to a burning brand;
And gliding on with noiseless foot, o'er winding stair and hall,
She nears the chamber where is heard her infant's trembling call.

She smoothed the pillow where he lay, she warmly tucked
the bed,
She wiped his tears and stroked the curls that clustered
round his head.
The child, caressed, unknowing fear, hath nestled him to rest;
The mother folds her wings beside—the mother from the
blest!

The metre of this episode has been altered from its original form, and, we think, improved by the alteration. Formerly, in place of four lines of seven iambuses, the stanza consisted of eight lines—a line of four iambuses alternating with one of three—a more ordinary and artificial, therefore a less desirable arrangement. In the three last quatrains there is an awkward vacillation between the present and perfect tenses, as in the words "beheld," "glides," "kissed," "laid," "hath scorched," "smoothed," "wiped," "hath nestled," "folds." These petty objections, of course, will by no means interfere with the reader's appreciation of the episode, with his admiration of its pathos, its delicacy and its grace—we had almost forgotten to say of its pure and high imagination.

We proceed to cull from "The Sinless Child," a few brief but happy passages at random.

Gentle she was and full of love,
With voice exceeding sweet,
And eyes of dove-like tenderness
Where joy and sadness meet.

———with calm and tranquil eye
That turned instinctively to seek
The blueness of the sky.

Bright missals from angelic throngs
In every bye-way left—
How were the earth of glory shorn
Were it of flowers bereft!

And wheresoe'er the weary heart
Turns in its dim despair,
The meek-eyed blossom upward looks
Inviting it to prayer.

The very winds were hushed to peace
Within the quiet dell,
Or murmured through the rustling bough
Like breathings of a shell.

The mystery of life;
Its many hopes, its many fears
Its sorrow and its strife—
A spirit to behold in all
To guide, admonish, cheer,-
Forever, in all time and place,
To feel an angel near.

I may not scorn the spirit's rights,
For I have seen it rise,
All written o'er with thought, thought, thought
As with a thousand eyes!

And there are things that blight the soul
As with a mildew blight,
And in the temple of the Lord
Put out the blessed light.

It is in the *point* of passages such as these, in their vigor, terseness and novelty, combined with exquisite delicacy, that the more obvious merit of the poem consists. A thousand such *quotable* paragraphs are interspersed through the work, and of themselves would be sufficient to insure its popularity. But we repeat that a far loftier excellence lies *perdu* amid the minor deficiencies of "The Sinless Child."

The other poems of the volume are, as entire compositions, nearer perfection, but, in general, have less of the true poetical element. "The Acorn" is perfect as regards its construction—although, to be

sure, the design is so simple that it could scarcely be marred in its execution. The idea is the old one of detailing the progress of a plant from its germ to its maturity, with the uses and general vicissitudes to which it is subjected. In this case of the acorn the vicissitudes are well imagined, and the execution is more skilfully managed—is more definite, vigorous and pronounced, than in the longer poem. The chief of the minor objections is to the rhythm, which is imperfect, vacillating awkwardly between iambuses and anapæsts, after such fashion that it is impossible to decide whether the rhythm in itself—that is, whether the general intention is anapæstical or iambic. Anapæsts introduced, for the relief of monotone, into an iambic rhythm, are not only admissible but commendable, if not absolutely demanded; but in this case they prevail to such an extent as to overpower the iambic intention, thus rendering the whole versification difficult of comprehension. We give, by way of example, a stanza with the scanning divisions and quantities:

They came | with gifts | that should life | bestow; |
The dew | and the li | ving air— |
The bane | that should work | its dead | ly wo, |
The lit | tle men | had there; |
In the gray | moss cup | was the mil | dew brought, |
The worm | in a rose- | leaf rolled, |
And ma | ny things | with destruc | tion fraught |
That its doom | were quick | ly told. |

Here iambuses and anapæsts are so nearly balanced that the ear hesitates to receive the rhythm as either anapæstic or iambic, that is, it hesitates to receive

it as anything at all. A rhythm should always be distinctly marked by its first foot—that is to say, if the design is iambic, we should commence with an unmistakable iambus, and proceed with this foot until the ear gets fairly accustomed to it before we attempt variation; for which, indeed, there is no *necessity* unless for the relief of monotone. When the rhythm is in this manner thoroughly recognized, we may sparingly vary with anapæsts (or, if the rhythm be trochaic, with dactyls). Spondees, still more sparingly, as absolute discords, may be also introduced either in an iambic or trochaic rhythm. In common with a very large majority of American, and, indeed, of European poets, Mrs. Smith seems to be totally unacquainted with the principles of versification—by which, of course, we mean its *rationale*. Of technical *rules* on the subject there are rather more than enough in our prosodies, and from these abundant rules are deduced the abundant blunders of our poets. There is not a prosody in existence which is worth the paper on which it is printed.

Of the miscellaneous poems included in the volume before us, we greatly prefer "The Summons Answered." It has more of *power*, more of genuine imagination than anything written by its author. It is a story of three "bacchanals," who, on their way from the scene of their revelry, are arrested by the beckoning of a white hand from the partially unclosing door of a tomb. One of the party obeys the summons. It is the tomb of his wife. We quote the two concluding stanzas:

> This restless life with its little fears,
> Its hopes that fade so soon,
> With its yearning tenderness and tears,
> And the burning agony that sears—
> *The sun gone down at noon—*

The spirit crushed to its prison wall,
Mindless of all beside—
This young Richard saw, and felt it all—
Well might the dead abide!

The crimson light in the east is high,
The hoar-frost coldly gleams,
And Richard chilled to the heart well-nigh,
Hath raised his wildered and bloodshot eye
From that long night of dreams.
He shudders to think of the reckless band
And the fearful oath he swore—
But most he thinks of the clay-cold hand,
That opened the old tomb door.

With the quotation of these really noble passages—noble, because full of the truest poetic energy—we take leave of the fair authoress. She is entitled, beyond doubt, to all, and perhaps to much more than the commendation she has received. Her faults are among the peccadilloes, and her merits among the sterling excellencies of the muse.

J. G. C. BRAINARD

AMONG all the *pioneers* of American literature, whether prose or poetical, there is *not one* whose productions have not been much overrated by his countrymen. But this fact is more especially obvious in respect to such of these pioneers as are no longer living,—nor is it a fact of so deeply transcendental a nature as only to be accounted for by the Emersons and Alcotts. In the first place, we have but to consider that gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyper-patriotic triumph have been blended, and finally confounded with mere admiration, or appreciation, in respect to the labors of our earlier writers; and, in the second place, that Death has thrown his customary veil of the sacred over these commingled feelings, forbidding them, in a measure, to be *now* separated or subjected to analysis. "In speaking of the deceased," says that excellent old English Moralist, James Puckle, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence." And with somewhat too inconsiderate a promptitude have we followed the spirit of this quaint advice. The mass of American readers have been, hitherto, in no frame of mind to view with calmness, and to discuss with discrimination, the true claims of the few who were *first* in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as, in the plenitude of her arrogance, she, at one period, half affected and half wished to believe; and where any of these few have departed

from among us, the difficulty of bringing their pretentions to the test of a proper criticism has been enhanced in a very remarkable degree. But even as concerns the living: is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and that Mr. Paulding owes *all* of his reputation as a novelist, to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither Mr. Paulding nor Mr. Cooper *could* have written, are daily published by native authors without attracting more of commendation than can be crammed into a hack newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this is because there is no longer either reason or wit in the query,—"Who reads an American book?" It is not because we lack the talent in which the days of Mr. Paulding exulted, but because such talent has shown itself to be common. It is not because we have *no* Mr. Coopers; but because it has been demonstrated that we might, at any moment, have as many Mr. Coopers as we please. In fact we are now strong in our own resources. We have, at length, arrived at that epoch when our literature may and must stand on its own merits, or fall through its own defects. We have snapped asunder the leading-strings of our British Grandmamma, and, better still, we have survived the first hours of our novel freedom,—the first licentious hours of a hobbledehoy braggadocio and swagger. *At last*, then, we are in a condition to be criticised—even more, to be neglected; and the journalist is no longer in danger of being impeached for *lese majesté* of the Democratic Spirit, who shall assert, with sufficient humility, that we have committed an error in mistaking "Kettell's Specimens" for the Pentateuch, or Joseph Rodman Drake for Apollo.

The case of this latter gentleman is one which well illustrates what we have been saying. We believe it was about 1835 that Mr. Dearborn republished the "Culprit Fay," which then, as at the period of its original issue, was belauded by the universal American press, in a manner which must have appeared ludicrous—not to speak *very* plainly—in the eyes of all unprejudiced observers. With a curiosity much excited by comments at once so grandiloquent and so general, we procured and read the poem. What we found it we ventured to express distinctly, and at some length, in the pages of the "Southern Messenger." It is a well versified and sufficiently fluent composition, without high merit of any kind. Its defects are gross and superabundant. Its plot and conduct, considered in reference to its scene, are absurd. Its originality is none at all. Its imagination (and this was the great feature insisted upon by its admirers,) is but a "counterfeit presentment,"—but the shadow of the Shade of that lofty quality which is, in fact, the soul of the Poetic Sentiment—but a drivelling *effort to be fanciful*—an effort resulting in a species of hop-skip-and-go-merry rhodomontade, which the uninitiated feel it a duty to call ideality, and to admire as such, while lost in surprise at the impossibility of performing at least the latter half of the duty with any thing like satisfaction to themselves. And all this we not only asserted, but without difficulty *proved*. Dr. Drake has written some beautiful poems, but the "Culprit Fay," is not of them. We neither expected to hear any dissent from our opinions, nor did we hear any. On the contrary, the approving voice of every critic in the country whose *dictum* we had been ascustomed to respect, was to us a sufficient assurance that we had not been very grossly in the wrong. In fact the

public taste was then *approaching* the right. The truth indeed had not, as yet, made itself heard; but we had reached a point at which it had but to be plainly and boldly *put*, to be, at least tacitly admitted.

This habit of apotheosising our literary pioneers was a most indiscriminating one. Upon *all* who wrote, the applause was plastered with an impartiality really refreshing. Of course, the system favored the dunces at the expense of true merit! and, since there existed a certain fixed standard of exaggerated commendation to which all were adapted after the fashion of Procrustes, it is clear that the most meritorious required *the least stretching*,—in other words, that although all were much overrated, the deserving were overrated in a less degree than the unworthy. Thus with Brainard:—a man of indisputable genius, who, in any more discriminate system of panegyric, would have been long ago bepuffed into Demi-Deism; for if "M'Fingal," for example, is in reality what we have been told, the commentators upon Trumbull, as a matter of the simplest consistency, should have exalted into the seventh heaven of poetical dominion the author of the many graceful and vigorous effusions which are now lying, in a very neat little volume, before us.*

Yet we maintain that even these effusions have been overpraised, and materially so. It is not that Brainard has not written poems which may rank with those of any American, with the single exception of Longfellow—but that the general merit of our whole national Muse has been estimated too highly, and that the author of "The Connecticut River" has, individually, shared in the exaggeration.

*The Poems of John G. C. Brainard. A New and Authentic Collection, with an original Memoir of his Life. Hartford: Edward Hopkins.

No poet among us has composed what would deserve the tithe of that amount of approbation so innocently lavished upon Brainard. But it would not suit our purpose just now, to enter into any elaborate analysis of his productions. It so happens, however, that we open the book at a brief poem, an examination of which will stand us in good stead of this general analysis, since it is by this very poem that the admirers of its author are content to swear —since it is the fashion to cite it as his best—since thus, in short, it is the chief basis of his notoriety, if not the surest triumph of his fame.

We allude to "The Fall of Niagara," and shall be pardoned for quoting it in full.

> The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain
> While I look upward to thee. It would seem
> As if God poured thee from his hollow hand,
> And hung his brow upon thy awful front,
> And spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
> Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake
> The "sound of many waters" and had bade
> Thy flood to chronicle the ages back
> And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.
>
> Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we
> That hear the question of that voice sublime?
> O, what are all the notes that ever rung
> From war's vain trumpet by thy thundering side?
> Yea, what is all the riot man can make
> In his short life to thy unceasing roar?
> And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to HIM
> Who drowned a world and heaped the waters far
> Above its loftiest mountains?—a light wave
> That breaks and whispers of its Maker's might.

It is a very usual thing to hear these verses called not merely the best of their author, but the best which have been written on the subject of Niagara. Its positive merit appears to us only

partial. We have been informed that the poet *had seen* the great cataract before writing the lines; but the Memoir prefixed to the present edition, denies what, for our own part, we never believed, for Brainard was truly a poet, and no poet could have looked upon Niagara, in the substance, and written thus about it. If he saw it at all, it must have been in fancy—"at a distance"—εκας—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilocus, who died ages before the villain was born

To the two opening verses we have no objection; but it may be well observed, in passing, that had the mind of the poet been really "crowned with strange thoughts," and not merely *engaged in an endeavor to think*, he would have entered at once upon the thoughts themselves, without allusion to the state of his brain. His subject would have left him no room for self.

The third line embodies an absurd, and impossible, not to say a contemptible image. We are called upon to conceive a similarity between the *continuous* downward sweep of Niagara, and the momentary splashing of some definite and of course trifling quantity of water *from a hand;* for, although it is the hand of the Deity himself which is referred to, the mind is irresistibly led, by the words "poured from his hollow hand," to that idea which has been *customarily* attached to such phrase. It is needless to say, moreover, that the bestowing upon Deity a human form. is at best a low and most unideal conception.* In fact the poet has committed the

*The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having really a human form—See Clarke's Sermons, vol. I. page 26, fol. edit.

"The drift of Milton's argument leads him to employ language which would appear, at first sight, to verge upon their doctrine: but it will be seen immediately that he guards himself against the charge of having adopted one of the most ignorant

grossest of errors in *likening* the fall to *any* material object; for the human fancy can fashion nothing which shall not be inferior in majesty to the cataract itself. Thus bathos is inevitable; and there is no better exemplification of bathos than Mr. Brainard has here given.*

The fourth line but renders the matter worse, for here the figure is most inartistically shifted. The handful of water becomes animate; for it has a front —that is, a forehead, and upon this forehead the Deity proceeds to hang a bow, that is, a rainbow. At the same time he "speaks in that loud voice," &c.; and here it is obvious that the ideas of the writer are in a sad state of fluctuation; for he transfers the idiosyncrasy of the fall itself (that is to say its sound) to the one who pours it from his hand. But not content with all this, Mr. Brainard commands the flood to *keep a kind of tally;* for this is the low thought which the expression about "notching in the rocks" immediately and inevitably induces. The whole of this first division of the poem, embraces, we hesitate not to say, one of the most jarring, inappropriate, mean, and in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery, which can be found out of the tragedies of Nat Lee, or the farces of Thomas Carlyle.

errors of the dark ages of the church."—Dr. Summer's Notes on Milton's "Christian Doctrine."

The opinion could never have been very general. Andens, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, who lived in the fourth century, was condemned for the doctrine, as heretical. His few disciples were called Anthropmorphites.—*See Du Pin.*

*It is remarkable that Drake, of whose "Culprit Fay" we have just spoken is, perhaps, the sole poet who has employed in the description of Niagara, imagery which does not produce a pathetic impression. In one of his minor poems he has these magnificent lines:

> How sweet 'twould be, *when all the air*
> *In moonlight swims,* along the river

In the latter division, the poet recovers himself, as if ashamed of his previous bombast. His natural instinct (for Brainard was no artist) has enabled him *to feel* that *subjects which surpass in grandeur all efforts of the human imagination are well depicted only in the simplest and least metaphorical language*— a proposition as susceptible of demonstration as any in Euclid. Accordingly, we find a material sinking in tone; although he does not at once discard all imagery. The "Deep calleth unto deep" is nevertheless a great improvement upon his previous rhetoricianism. The personification of the waters above and below would be good in reference to any subject less august. The moral reflections which immediately follow, have at least the merit of simplicity; but the poet exhibits no very lofty imagination when he bases these reflections only upon the cataract's superiority to man *in the noise it can create;* nor is the concluding idea more spirited,

> To couch upon the grass and hear
> Niagara's everlasting voice
> Far in the deep blue West away;
> That dreamy and poetic noise
> We mark not in the glare of day—
> Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
> When o'er the brink the tide is driven
> *As if the vast and sheeted sky*
> *In thunder fell from Heaven!*

where the mere difference between the quantity of water which occasioned the flood, and the quantity which Niagara precipitates, is made the measure of the Almighty Mind's superiority to that cataract which it called by a thought into existence.

But although "The Fall of Niagara" does not deserve all the unmeaning commendation it has received, there are, nevertheless, many truly beauti-

ful poems in this collection, and even more certain evidences of poetic power. "To a Child, the Daughter of a Friend" is exceedingly graceful and terse. "To the Dead" has equal grace, with more vigor, and, moreover, a touching air of melancholy. Its melody is very rich, and in the monotonous repetition, at each stanza, of a certain rhyme, we recognise a fantastic yet true imagination. "Mr. Merry's Lament for Long Tom" would be worthy of all praise were not its unusually beautiful rhythm an imitation from Campbell, who would deserve his high poetical rank, if only for its construction. Of the merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not *poetry*. Mr. Brainard excelled in them, and they are very good in their place; but that place is not in a collection of *poems*. The prevalent notions upon this head are extremely vague; yet we see no reason why any ambiguity should exist. Humor, with an exception to be made hereafter, is directly antagonistical to that which is the soul of the Muse proper; and the omni-prevalent belief, that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, is not without a firm basis in nature and in reason. But it so happens that humor and that quality which we have termed the soul of the Muse (imagination) are both essentially aided in their development by the same adventitious assistance—that of rhythm and of rhyme. Thus the only bond between humorous verse and poetry, properly so called, is that they employ in common, a certain tool. But this single circumstance has been sufficient to occasion, and to maintain through long ages, a confusion of two very distinct ideas in the brain of the unthinking critic. There is, nevertheless, an individual branch of humor which blends so happily with the ideal, that

from the union result some of the finest effects of legitimate poesy. We allude to what is termed "*archness*"—a trait with which popular feeling, which is unfailingly poetic, has invested, for example, the whole character of the fairy. In the volume before us there is a brief composition entitled "The Tree Toad" which will afford a fine exemplification of our idea. It seems to have been hurriedly constructed, as if its author had felt ashamed of his light labor. But that in his heart there was a secret exultation over these verses for which his reason found it difficult to account, *we know;* and there is not a really imaginative man within sound of our voice to-day, who, upon perusal of this little "Tree Toad" will not admit it to be one of the *truest poems* ever written by Brainard.

RUFUS DAWES

"AS a poet," says Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," "the standing of Mr. Dawes is as yet unsettled; there being a wide difference of opinion respecting his writings." The *width* of this difference is apparent; and, while to many it is matter for wonder, to those who have the interest of our Literature at heart, it is, more properly, a source of mortification and regret. That the author in question has long enjoyed what we term "a high poetical reputation," cannot be denied; and in no manner is this point more strikingly evinced than in the choice of his works, some two years since, by one of our most enterprising publishers, as the *initial* volume of a series, the avowed object of which was the setting forth, in the best array of paper, type, and pictorial embellishment, the *élite* of the American poets. As a writer of occasional stanzas he has been long before the public; always eliciting, from a great variety of sources, *unqualified* commendation. With the exception of a solitary remark, adventured by ourselves in "A Chapter on Autography," there has been no written dissent from the universal opinion in his favor—the universal *apparent* opinion. Mr. Griswold's observation must be understood, we presume, as referring to the *conversational* opinion upon this topic; or it is not impossible that he holds in view the difference between the criticism of the newspaper paragraphs and the private comment of the educated and intelligent. Be this as it may, the

rapidly growing "reputation" of our poet was much enhanced by the publication of his first compositions "of length," and attained its climax, we believe, upon the public recitation by himself, of a tragic drama, in five acts, entitled "Athenia of Damascus," to a large assembly of admiring and applauding *friends*, gathered together for the occasion in one of the halls of the University of New-York.

This popular decision, so frequent and so public, in regard to the poetical ability of Mr. Dawes, might be received as evidence of his actual merit (and by thousands it *is* so received) were it not too scandalously at variance with a species of criticism which *will not* be resisted—with the perfectly simple precepts of the very commonest common sense. The peculiarity of Mr. Griswold's observation has induced us to make inquiry into the true character of the volume to which we have before alluded, and which embraces, we believe, the chief portion of the published verse-compositions of its author.* This inquiry has but resulted in the confirmation of our previous opinion; and we now hesitate not to say, that no man in America has been more shamefully over-estimated than the one who forms the subject of this article. We say shamefully; for, though a better day is now dawning upon our literary interests, and a laudation so indiscriminate will never be sanctioned again—the laudation in this instance, as it stands upon record, must be regarded as a laughable although bitter satire upon the general zeal, accuracy and independence of that critical spirit which, but a few years ago, pervaded and degraded the land.

In what we shall say we have no intention of being

*"Geraldine," "Athenia of Damascus," and Miscellaneous Poems. By Rufus Dawes. Published by Samuel Colman, New-York.

profound. Here is a case in which anything like analysis would be utterly thrown away. Our purpose (which is truth) will be more fully answered by an unvarnished exposition of fact. It appears to us, indeed, that in excessive *generalization* lies one of the leading errors of a criticism employed upon a poetical literature so immature as our own. We rhapsodize rather than discriminate; delighting more in the dictation or discussion of a principle, than in its particular and methodical application. The wildest and most erratic effusion of the Muse, not utterly worthless, will be found more or less indebted to *method* for whatever of value it embodies; and we shall discover, conversely, that, in any analysis of even the wildest effusion, we labor without method only to labor without end. There is little reason for that vagueness of comment which, of late, we so pertinaciously affect, and which has been brought into fashion, no doubt, through the proverbial facility and security of merely general remark. In regard to the leading principles of true poesy, these, we think, stand not at all in need of the elucidation hourly wasted upon them. Founded in the unerring instincts of our nature, they are enduring and immutable. In a rigid scrutiny of any number of directly conflicting opinions upon a poetical topic, we will not fail to perceive that principles identical in every important point have been, in each opinion, either asserted, or intimated, or unwittingly allowed an influence. The differences of decision arose simply from those of application; and from such variety in the applied, rather than in the conceived idea, sprang, undoubtedly, the absurd distinctions of the "schools."

"*Geraldine*" is the title of the first and longest poem in the volume before us. It embraces some

three hundred and fifty stanzas—the whole being a most servile imitation of the "Don Juan" of Lord Byron. The outrageous absurdity of the systematic *digression* in the British original, was so managed as to form not a little portion of its infinite interest and humor; and the fine discrimination of the writer pointed out to him a limit beyond which he never ventured with this tantalizing species of drollery. "Geraldine" may be regarded, however, as a simple embodiment of the whole soul of digression. It is a mere mass of irrelevancy, amid the mad *farrago* of which we detect with difficulty even the faintest vestige of a narrative, and where the continuous lapse from impertinence to impertinence is seldom justified by any shadow of appositeness or even of the commonest relation.

To afford the reader any proper conception of the *story*, is of course a matter of difficulty; we must content ourselves with a mere outline of the general conduct. This we shall endeavor to give without indulgence in those feelings of risibility stirred up in us by the primitive perusal. We shall rigorously avoid every species of exaggeration, and confine ourselves, with perfect honesty, to the conveyance of a distinct image.

"Geraldine," then, opens with some four or five stanzas descriptive of a sylvan scene in America. We could, perhaps, render Mr. Dawes' poetical reputation no greater service than by the quotation of these simple verses in full.

I know a spot where poets fain would dwell,
To gather flowers and food for after thought,
As bees draw honey from the rose's cell,
To hive among the treasures they have wrought;
And there a cottage from a sylvan screen
Sent up a curling smoke amidst the green.

Around that hermit home of quietude
The elm trees whispered with the summer air,
And nothing ever ventured to intrude
But happy birds that caroled wildly there,
Or honey-laden harvesters that flew
Humming away to drink the morning dew.

Around the door the honey-suckle climbed
And Multa-flora spread her countless roses,
And never poet sang nor minstrel rhymed
Romantic scene where happiness reposes,
Sweeter to sense than that enchanting dell
Where home-sick memory fondly loves to dwell.

Beneath the mountain's brow the cottage stood
Hard by a shelving lake whose pebbled bed
Was skirted by the drapery of a wood
That hung its festoon foliage over head,
Where wild deer came at eve unharmed, to drink,
While moonlight threw their shadows from the brink.

The green earth heaved her giant waves around,
Where, through the mountain vista, one vast height
Towered heavenward without peer, his forehead bound
With gorgeous clouds, at times of changeful light,
While, far below, the lake in bridal rest
Slept with his glorious picture on her breast.

Here is an air of quietude in good keeping with the theme; the "giant waves" in the last stanzas redeem it from much exception otherwise; and perhaps we need say nothing at all of the suspicious-looking compound "multa-flora." Had Mr. Dawes always written even nearly so well, we should have been spared to-day the painful task imposed upon us by a stern sense of our critical duty. These passages are followed immediately by an address or invocation to "Peerless America," including apostrophes to Allston and Claude Lorraine.

We now learn the name of the tenant of the cot-

tage, which is *Wilton*, and ascertain that he has an only daughter. A single stanza quoted at this juncture will aid the reader's conception of the queer tone of philosophical rhapsody with which the poem teems, and some specimen of which is invariably made to follow each little modicum of incident.

> How like the heart is to an instrument
> A touch can wake to gladness or to woe!
> How like the circumambient element
> The spirit with its undulating flow!
> The heart—the soul—Oh, Mother Nature, why
> This universal bond of sympathy.

After two pages much in this manner, we are told that *Geraldine* is the name of the maiden, and are informed, with comparatively little circumlocution, of her character. She is beautiful, and kind-hearted, and somewhat romantic, and "some thought her reason touched"—for which we have little disposition to blame them. There is now much about Kant and Fichte; about Schelling, Hegel and Cousin; (which latter is made to rhyme with *gang;*) about Milton, Byron, Homer, Spinoza, David Hume, and Mirabeau; and a good deal, too, about the *scribendi cacoëthes*, in which an evident misunderstanding of the quantity of *cacoëthes* brings, again, into very disagreeable suspicion the writer's cognizance of the Latin tongue. At this point we may refer, also, to such absurdities as

> Truth with her thousand-folded robe of error
> Close shut in her *sarcophagi* of terror—

And

> Where *candelabri* silver the white halls.

Now, no one is presupposed to be cognizant of any language beyond his own; to be ignorant of Latin is no crime; to pretend a knowledge is beneath contempt; and the pretender will attempt in vain to utter or to write two consecutive phrases of a foreign idiom, without betraying his deficiency to those who are conversant.

At page 39, there is some prospect of a progress in the story. Here we are introduced to a Mr. Acus and his fair daughter, Miss Alice.

> Acus had been a dashing Bond-street tailor
> Some few short years before, who took his measures
> So carefully he always cut the jailor
> And filled his coffers with exhaustless treasures;
> Then with his wife, a son, and three fair daughters,
> He sunk the goose and straightway crossed the waters.

His residence is in the immediate vicinity of Wilton. The daughter, Miss Alice, who is said to be quite a belle, is enamored of one Waldron, a foreigner, a lion, and a gentleman of questionable reputation. His character (which for our life and soul we cannot comprehend) is given within the space of some forty or fifty stanzas, made to include, at the same time, an essay on motives, deduced from the text "whatever is must be," and illuminated by a long note at the end of the poem, wherein the *systime* (quere *système?*) de *la Nature* is sturdily attacked. Let us speak the truth: this note (and the whole of them, for there are many,) may be regarded as a glorious specimen of the concentrated essence of rigmarole, and, to say nothing of their utter absurdity *per se*, are so ludicrously uncalled for, and grotesquely out of place, that we found it impossible to refrain, during their perusal, from a most unbecoming and uproarious guffaw. We will be par-

doned for giving a specimen—selecting it for its brevity.

> Reason, he deemed, could measure everything,
> And reason told him that there was a law
> Of mental action which must ever fling
> A death-bolt at all faith, and this he saw
> Was Transference. (14)

Turning to Note 14, we read thus—

"If any one has a curiosity to look into this subject, (does Mr. Dawes *really* think any one so great a fool?) and wishes to see how far the force of reasoning and analysis may carry him, independently of revelation, I would suggest (thank you, sir,) such inquiries as the following:

"Whether the first Philosophy, considered in relation to Physics, was first in time?

"How far our moral perceptions have been influenced by natural phenomena?

"How far our metaphysical notions of cause and effect are attributable to the transference of notions connected with logical language?"

And all this in a poem about Acus, a tailor!

Waldron prefers, unhappily, Geraldine to Alice, and Geraldine returns his love, exciting thus the deep indignation of the neglected fair one,

> whom love and jealousy bear up
> To mingle poison in her rival's cup.

Miss A. has among her adorers one of the genus loafer, whose appellation, not improperly, is Bore. B. is acquainted with a milliner—the milliner of the disconsolate lady.

> She made this milliner her friend, who swore
> To work her full revenge through Mr. Bore.

And now says the poet—

I leave your sympathetic fancies,
To fill the outline of this pencil sketch.

This filling has been, with us at least, a matter of no little difficulty. We believe, however, that the affair is intended to run thus:—Waldron is enticed to some vile sins by Bore, and the knowledge of these, on the part of Alice, places the former gentleman in her power.

We are now introduced to a *fête champêtre* at the residence of Acus, who, by the way, has a son, Clifford, a suitor to Geraldine with the approbation of her father—that good old gentleman, for whom our sympathies were excited in the beginning of things, being influenced by the consideration that this scion of the house of the tailor will inherit a plum. The worst of the whole is, however, that the romatic Geraldine, who should have known better, and who loves Waldron, loves also the young knight of the shears. The consequence is a rencontre of the rival suitors at the *fête champêtre;* Waldron knocking his antagonist on the head, and throwing him into the lake. The murderer, as well as we can make out the narrative, now joins a piratical band, among whom he alternately cuts throats and sings songs of his own composition. In the mean time the deserted Geraldine mourns alone, till, upon a certain day,

A shape stood by her like a thing of air—
She started—Waldron's haggard face was there.

. . . . . .

He laid her gently down, of sense bereft,
And sunk her picture on her bosom's snow,
And close beside these lines in blood he left:
"Farewell forever, Geraldine, I go
Another woman's victim—dare I tell?
'Tis Alice!—curse us, Geraldine!—farewell!"

There is no possibility of denying the fact: this *is* a droll piece of business. The lover brings forth a miniature, (Mr. Dawes has a passion for miniatures,) *sinks* it in the bosom of the lady, cuts his finger, and writes with the blood an epistle, (*where* is not specified, but we presume he indites it upon the bosom as it is "close beside" the picture,) in which epistle he announces that he is "another woman's victim," giving us to understand that he himself is a woman after all, and concluding with the delicious bit of Billingsgate

> dare I tell?
> 'Tis Alice!—curse us, Geraldine!—farewell!

We suppose, however, that "curse us" is a misprint; for why should Geraldine curse both herself and her lover?—it should have been "curse it!" no doubt. The whole passage, perhaps, would have read better thus—

> oh, my eye!
> 'Tis Alice!—d—n it, Geraldine!—good bye!

The remainder of the narrative may be briefly summed up. Waldron returns to his professional engagements with the pirates, while Geraldine, attended by her father, goes to sea for the benefit of her health. The consequence is inevitable. The vessels of the separated lovers meet and engage in the most diabolical of conflicts. Both are all blown to pieces. In a boat from one vessel, Waldron escapes—in a boat from the other, the lady Geraldine. Now, as a second natural consequence, the parties meet again—Destiny is every thing in such cases. Well, the parties meet again. The lady Geraldine has "that miniature" about her neck, and the circumstance proves too much for the excited state of

mind of Mr. Waldron. He just seizes her ladyship, therefore, by the small of the waist and incontinently leaps with her into the sea.

However intolerably absurd this skeleton of the story may appear, a thorough perusal will convince the reader that the entire fabric is even more so. It is impossible to convey, in any such digest as we have given, a full idea of the *niaiseries* with which the narrative abounds. An utter want of *keeping* is especially manifest throughout. In the most solemnly serious passages we have, for example, incidents of the world of 1839, jumbled up with the distorted mythology of the Greeks. Our conclusion of the drama, as we just gave it, was perhaps ludicrous enough; but how much more preposterous does it appear in the grave language of the poet himself!

> And round her neck the miniature was hung
> Of him who gazed with Hell's unmingled wo;
> He saw her, kissed her cheek, and wildly flung
> His arms around her with a mad'ning throw—
> Then plunged within the cold unfathomed deep
> While sirens sang their victim to his sleep!

Only think of a group of *sirens* singing to sleep a modern "miniatured" flirt, kicking about in the water with a New York dandy in tight pantaloons!

But not even these stupidities would suffice to justify a total condemnation of the poetry of Mr. Dawes. We have known follies very similar committed by men of real ability, and have been induced to disregard them in earnest admiration of the brilliancy of the minor beauty of *style*. Simplicity, perspicuity and vigor, or a well-disciplined ornateness of language, have done wonders for the reputation of many a writer really deficient in the higher and more essential qualities of the Muse. But

upon these minor points of manner our poet has not even the shadow of a shadow to sustain him. His works, in this respect, may be regarded as a theatrical world of mere verbiage, somewhat speciously bedizzened with a tinselly meaning well adapted to the eyes of the rabble. There is not a page of anything that he has written which will bear, for an instant, the scrutiny of a critical eye. Exceedingly fond of the glitter of metaphor, he has not the capacity to manage it, and, in the awkward attempt, jumbles together the most incongruous of ornament. Let us take any passage of "Geraldine" by way of exemplification.

> ———Thy rivers swell the sea—
> In one eternal diapason pour
> Thy cataracts the hymn of liberty,
> Teaching the clouds to thunder.

Here we have cataracts teaching clouds to thunder—and how? By means of a hymn.

> Why should chromatic discord charm the ear
> And smiles and tears stream o'er with troubled joy?

Tears may stream over, but not smiles.

> Then comes the breathing time of young Romance,
> The June of life, when summer's earliest ray
> Warms the red arteries, that bound and dance
> With soft voluptuous impulses at play,
> While the full heart sends forth as from a hive
> A thousand winged messengers alive.

Let us reduce this to a simple statement, and we have—what? The earliest ray of summer warming red arteries, which are bounding and dancing, and playing with a parcel of urchins, called voluptuous impulses, while the bee-hive of a heart attached to

these dancing arteries is at the same time sending forth a swarm of its innocent little inhabitants.

> The eyes were like the sapphire of deep air,
> The garb that distance robes elysium in,
> But oh, so much of heaven lingered there
> The wayward heart forgot its blissful sin
> And worshipped all Religion well forbids
> Beneath the silken fringes of their lids.

That *distance* is *not* the cause of the sapphire of the sky, is not to our present purpose. We wish merely to call attention to the verbiage of the stanza. It is impossible to put the latter portion of it into anything like intelligible prose. So much of heaven lingered in the lady's eyes that the wayward heart forgot its blissful sin, and worshiped everything which religion forbids, beneath the silken fringes of the lady's eyelids. This we cannot be compelled to understand, and shall therefore say nothing further about it.

> She loved to lend Imagination wing
> And link her heart with Juliet's in a dream,
> And feel the music of a sister string
> That thrilled the current of her vital stream.

How delightful a picture we have here! A lady is lending one of her wings to the spirit, or genius, called Imagination, who, of course, has lost one of his own. While thus employed with one hand, with the other she is chaining her heart to the heart of the fair Juliet. At the same time she is feeling the music of a sister string, and this string is thrilling the current of the lady's vital stream. If this is downright nonsense we cannot be held responsible for its perpetration; it is but the downright nonsense of Mr. Dawes.

Again—

> Without the Palinurus of self-science
> Byron embarked upon the stormy sea,
> To adverse breezes hurling his defiance
> And dashing up the rainbows on his lee,
> And chasing those he made in wildest mirth,
> Or sending back their images to earth.

This stanza we have more than once seen quoted as a fine specimen of the poetical powers of our author. His lordship, no doubt, is herein made to cut a very remarkable figure. Let us imagine him, for one moment, embarked upon a stormy sea, hurling his defiance, (literally throwing his gauntlet or glove,) to the adverse breezes, dashing up rain bows on his lee, laughing at them, and chasing them at the same time, and, in conclusion, "sending back their images to earth." But we have already wearied the reader with this abominable rigmarole. We shall be pardoned, (after the many specimens thus given at random), for not carrying out the design we originally intended: that of commenting upon two or three successive pages of "*Geraldine*," with a view of showing, (in a spirit apparently more fair than that of particular selection,) the *entireness* with which the whole poem is pervaded by unintelligibility. To every thinking mind, however, this would seem a work of supererogation. In such matters, by such understandings, the brick of the *skolastikos* will be received implicitly as a sample of the house. The writer *capable*, to any extent, of such absurdity as we have pointed out, *cannot*, by any possibility, produce a long article worth reading. We say this in the very teeth of the magnificent assembly which listened to the recital of Mr. Dawes, in the great hall of the University of New York. We shall leave "Athenia of Damascus," without comment, to the

decision of those who may find time and temper for its perusal, and conclude our extracts by a quotation, from among the minor poems, of the following very respectable

ANACREONTIC

Fill again the mantling bowl
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking!
None but slaves should bend the soul
Beneath the chains of mortal making:
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Mark this cup of rosy wine
With virgin pureness deeply blushing;
Beauty pressed it from the vine
While Love stood by to charm its gushing;
He who dares to drain it now
Shall drink such bliss as seldom gladdens;
The Moslem's dream
Would joyless seem
To him whose brain its rapture maddens.

Pleasure sparkles on the brim—
Lethe lies far deeper in it—
Both, enticing, wait for him
Whose heart is warm enough to win it;
Hearts like ours, if e'er they chill
Soon with love again must lighten.
Skies may wear
A darksome air
Where sunshine most is known to brighten.

Then fill, fill high the mantling bowl!
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking;
Care shall never cloud the soul
While Beauty's beaming eyes are waking.

Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Whatever shall be, hereafter, the position of Mr. Dawes in the poetical world, he will be indebted for it altogether to his shorter compositions, some of which have the merit of tenderness; others of melody and force. What seems to be the popular opinion in respect to his more voluminous effusions, has been brought about, in some measure, by a certain general *tact*, nearly amounting to taste, and more nearly the converse of talent. This tact has been especially displayed in the choice of not inelegant titles and other externals; in a peculiar imitative speciousness of manner, pervading the surface of his writings; and, (here we have the anomaly of a positive benefit deduced from a radical defect,) in an absolute deficiency in basis, in *stamen*, in matter, or pungency, which, if even slightly evinced, might have invited the reader to an intimate and understanding perusal, whose result would have been disgust. His poems have not been condemned, only because they have never been read. The glitter upon the surface has sufficed, with the newspaper critic, to justify his hyperboles of praise.

Very few persons, we feel assured, have had sufficient nerve to wade *through* the entire volume now in question, except, as in our own case, with the single object of criticism in view. Mr. Dawes has, also, been aided to a poetical reputation by the amiability of his character as a man. How efficient such causes have before been in producing such effects, is a point but too thoroughly understood.

We have already spoken of the numerous *friends*

of the poet; and we shall not here insist upon the fact, that *we* bear him no personal ill-will. With those who know us, such a declaration would appear supererogatory; and by those who know us not, it would, doubtless, be received with incredulity. What we have said, however, is *not* in opposition to Mr. Dawes, nor even so much in opposition to the poems of Mr. Dawes, as in defence of the many true souls which, in Mr. Dawes' apotheosis are aggrieved. The laudation of the unworthy is to the worthy the most bitter of all wrong. But it is unbecoming in him who merely demonstrates a truth, to offer reason or apology for the demonstration.

FLACCUS—THOMAS WARD

THE poet now comprehended in the *cognomen* Flaccus, is by no means our ancient friend Quintus Horatius, nor even his ghost, but merely a Mr.—— Ward, of Gotham, once a contributor to the New York "American," and to the New York "Knickerbocker" Magazine. He is characterized by Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," as a gentleman of elegant leisure.

What there is in "elegant leisure" so much at war with the divine *afflatus*, it is not very difficult, but quite unnecessary, to say. The *fact* has been long apparent. Never sing the Nine so well as when penniless. The *mens divinior* is one thing, and the *otium cum dignitate* quite another.

Of course Mr. Ward is not, as a poet, altogether destitute of merit. If so, the public had been spared these paragraphs. But the sum of his deserts has been footed up by a *clique* who are in the habit of reckoning units as tens in all cases where champagne and "elegant leisure" are concerned. We do not consider him, at all points, a Pop Emmons, but, with deference to the more matured opinions of the "Knickerbocker," we may be permitted to entertain a doubt whether he is either Jupiter Tonans, or Phœbus Apollo.

Justice is not, at all times, to all persons, the most desirable thing in the world, but then there is the old adage about the tumbling of the heavens, and *simple* justice is all that we propose in the case of Mr. Ward. We have *no* design to be bitter. We notice his book

at all, only because it is an unusually large one of its kind, because it is here lying upon our table, and because, whether justly or unjustly, whether for good reason or for none, it has attracted some portion of the attention of the public.

The volume is entitled, somewhat affectedly, "Passaic, a Group of Poems touching that river: with Other Musings, by Flaccus," and embodies, we believe, all the previously published effusions of its author. It commences with a very pretty "Sonnet to Passaic," and from the second poem, "Introductory Musings on Rivers," we are happy in being able to quote an entire page of even remarkable beauty.

Beautiful Rivers! that adown the vale
With graceful passage journey to the deep,
Let me along your grassy marge recline
At ease, and, musing, meditate the strange
Bright history of your life; yes, from your birth
Has beauty's shadow chased your every step:
The blue sea was your mother, and the sun
Your glorious sire, clouds your voluptuous cradle,
Roofed with o'erarching rainbows; and your fall
To earth was cheered with shouts of happy birds,
With brightened faces of reviving flowers,
And meadows, while the sympathizing west
Took holiday, and donn'd her richest robes.
From deep mysterious wanderings your springs
Break bubbling into beauty; where they lie
In infant helplessness awhile, but soon
Gathering in tiny brooks, they gambol down
The steep sides of the mountain, laughing, shouting,
Teasing the wild flowers, and at every turn
Meeting new playmates still to swell their ranks;
Which, with the rich increase resistless grown,
Shed foam and thunder, that the echoing wood
Rings with the boisterous glee; while, o'er their head
Catching their spirit blithe, young rainbows sport,
The frolic children of the wanton sun.

Nor is your swelling prime, or green old age,
Though calm, unlovely; still, where'er ye move,
Your train is beauty; trees stand grouping by,
To mark your graceful progress; giddy flowers
And vain, as beauties wont, stoop o'er the verge
To greet their faces in your flattering glass;
The thirsty herd are following at your side;
And water-birds in clustering fleets convoy
Your sea-bound tides; and jaded man, released
From worldly thralldom, here his dwelling plants—
Here pauses in your pleasant neighborhood,
Sure of repose along your tranquil shores;
And, when your end approaches, and ye blend
With the eternal ocean, ye shall fade
As placidly as when an infant dies,
And the Death-Angel shall your powers withdraw
Gently as twilight takes the parting day,
And, with a soft and gradual decline
That cheats the senses, lets it down to night.

There is nothing very *original* in all this; the general idea is perhaps the most absolutely trite in poetical literature; but the theme is not the less just on this account, while we must confess that it is admirably handled. The picture embodied in the whole of the concluding paragraph is perfect. The seven final lines convey not only a novel but a highly appropriate and beautiful image.

What follows, of this poem, however, is by no means worthy so fine a beginning. Instead of confining himself to the true poetical thesis, the Beauty or the Sublimity of river scenery, he descends into mere meteorology—into the uses and general philosophy of rain, &c.—matters which should be left to Mr. Espy, who knows something about them, as we are sorry to say Mr. Flaccus does *not*.

The second and chief *poem* in the volume, is entitled "The Great Descender." We emphasize the "poem" merely by way of suggesting that the

"Great Descender" is anything else. We never could understand what pleasure men of talent can take in concocting elaborate doggerel of this order. Least of all can we comprehend why, having perpetrated the atrocity, they should place it at the door of the Muse. We are at a loss to know by what right, human or divine, twattle of this character is intruded into a collection of what professes to be *Poetry*. We put it to Mr. Ward, in all earnestness, if the "Great Descender," which is a history of Sam Patch, has a single attribute, beyond that of mere versification, in common with what even Sam Patch himself would have had the hardihood to denominate a poem.

Let us call this thing a rhymed *jeu d'esprit*, a burlesque, or what not?—and even so called and judged by its new name, we must still regard it as a failure. Even in the loosest compositions we demand a certain degree of *keeping*. But in the "Great Descender" none is apparent. The *tone* is unsteady—fluctuating between the grave and the gay—and never being precisely either. Thus there is a failure in both. The intention being never rightly *taken*, we are of course never exactly in condition either to weep or to laugh.

We do not pretend to be the Oracles of Dodona, but it does really appear to us that Mr. Flaccus intended the whole matter, in the first instance, as a solemnly serious thing; and that, having composed it in a grave vein, he became apprehensive of its exciting derision and so interwove sundry touches of the burlesque, behind whose equivocal aspect, he might shelter himself at need. In no other supposition can we reconcile the *spotty* appearance of the whole with a belief in the sanity of the author. It is difficult also in any other view of the case, to

appreciate the air of positive gravity with which he descants upon the advantages to *Science* which have accrued from a man's making a frog of himself. Mr. Ward is frequently pleased to denominate Mr. Patch "a martyr of science," and appears very doggedly in earnest in all passages such as the following:

> Through the glad Heavens, which tempests now conceal,
> Deep thunder-guns in quick succession peal,
> As if salutes were firing from the sky,
> To hail the triumph and the victory.
> Shout! trump of Fame, till thy brass lungs burst out!
> Shout! mortal tongues! deep-throated thunders, shout!
> For lo! electric *genius*, downward hurled,
> Has startled *Science*, and illumed the world!

That Mr. Patch was a *genius* we do not doubt; so is Mr. Ward; but the *science* displayed in jumping down the Falls, is a point above us. There might have been some science in jumping *up*.

"The Worth of Beauty; or a Lover's Journal," is the title of the poem next in place and importance. Of this composition Mr. W. thus speaks in a Note: "The individual to whom the present poem relates, and who had suffered severely all the pains and penalties which arise from the want of those personal charms so much admired by him in others, gave the author, many years since, some fragments of a journal kept in his early days, in which he had bared his heart, and set down all his thoughts and feelings. This prose journal has here been transplanted into the richer soil of verse."

The narrative of the friend of Mr. Flaccus must, originally, have been a very good thing. By "originally," we mean before it had the misfortune to be "transplanted in the richer soil of verse"—which has by no means agreed with its constitution. But, even through the dense fog of our author's

rhythm, we can get an occasional glimpse of its merit. It must have been the work of a heart on fire with passion, and the utter *abandon* of the details, reminds us even of Jean Jacques. But alas for this "richer soil!" *Can* we venture to present our readers with a specimen?

> Now roses blush, and violets' eyes,
> And seas reflect the glance of skies;
> And now *that frolic pencil* streaks
> With quaintest tints the tulips' cheeks;
> Now jewels bloom in secret worth,
> Like blossoms of the inner earth;
> Now painted birds are pouring round
> The beauty and the wealth of sound;
> Now sea-shells glance with quivering ray,
> Too rare to seize, too fleet to stay,
> And hues out-dazzling all the rest
> Are dashed profusely on the west,
> While rainbows seem to palettes changed,
> Whereon the motley tints are ranged.
> But soft the moon *that pencil* tipped,
> As though, in liquid radiance dipped,
> A likeness of the sun it drew,
> But flattered him with pearlier hue;
> Which haply spilling runs astray,
> And blots with light the milky way;
> While stars besprinkle all the air,
> Like spatterings of *that pencil* there.

All this by way of *exalting* the subject. The moon is made a painter, and the rainbow a palette. And the moon has a pencil (*that* pencil!) which she dips, by way of a brush, in the liquid radiance (the colors on a palette are *not* liquid,) and then *draws* (not paints) a likeness of the sun; but, in the attempt, plasters him too "pearly," puts it on too thick; the consequence of which is that some of the paint is spilt, and "runs astray" and besmears the milky way, and "spatters" the rest of the sky with stars!

We can only say that a very singular picture was spoilt in the making.

The *versification* of the "Worth of Beauty" proceeds much after this fashion; we select a fair example of the whole from page 43.

> Yes! pangs have cut my soul with grief
> So keen that gashes were relief,
> And racks have rung my spirit-frame
> To which the strain of joints were tame
> And battle strife itself were nought
> Beside the inner fight I've fought. etc., etc.

Nor do we regard any portion of it (so far as rhythm is concerned) as at all comparable to some of the better ditties of William Slater. Here, for example, from his Psalms, published in 1642:

> The righteous shall his sorrow scan
> And laugh at him, and say "behold
> What hath become of this here man
> That on his riches was so bold."

And here, again, are lines from the edition of the same Psalms, by Archbishop Parker, which we most decidedly prefer:

> Who sticketh to God in sable trust
> As Sion's mount he stands full just,
> Which moveth no whit nor yet can reel,
> But standeth forever as stiff as steel.

"The Martyr" and the "Retreat of Seventy-Six" are merely Revoluntionary incidents "done into verse," and spoilt in the doing. "The Retreat" begins with the remarkable line.

> Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!

which is elsewhere introduced into the poem. We

look in vain, here, for anything worth even qualified commendation.

"The Diary" is a record of events occurring to the author during a voyage from New York to Havre. Of these events a fit of sea-sickness is the chief. Mr. Ward, we believe, is the first of the *genus irritable* who has ventured to treat so delicate a subject with that grave dignity which is its due:

Rejoice! rejoice! already on my sight
  Bright shores, gray towers, and coming wonders reel;
My brain grows giddy—is it with delight?
  A swimming faintness, such as one might feel
When stabbed and dying, gathers on my sense—
It weighs me down—and now—help!—horror!—

But the "horror," and indeed all that ensues, we must leave to the fancy of the poetical.

Some pieces entitled "Humorous" next succeed, and one or two of them (for example, "The Graham System" and "The Bachelor's Lament") are not so *very* contemptible in their way, but the way itself is beneath even contempt.

"To an Infant in Heaven" embodies some striking thoughts, and, although feeble as a whole, and terminating lamely, may be cited as the best composition in the volume. We quote two or three of the opening stanzas:

Thou bright and star-like spirit!
  That in my visions wild
I see 'mid heaven's seraphic host—
  Oh! canst thou be my child?

My grief is quenched in wonder,
  And pride arrests my sighs;
A branch from this unworthy stock
  Now blossoms in the skies.

Our hopes of thee were lofty,
But have we cause to grieve?
Oh! could our fondest, proudest wish
A nobler fate conceive?

The little weeper tearless!
The sinner snatched from sin!
The babe to more than manhood grown,
Ere childhood did begin!

And I, thy earthly teacher,
Would blush thy powers to see
Thou art to me a parent now,
And I a child to thee!

There are several other pieces in the book—but it is needless to speak of them in detail. Among them we note one or two political effusions, and one or two which are (satirically?) termed satirical. All are worthless.

Mr. Ward's *imagery*, at detached points, has occasional vigor and appropriateness; we may go so far as to say that, at times, it is strikingly beautiful—by accident of course. Let us cite a few instances. At page 53 we read—

O! happy day!—earth, sky is fair,
And fragrance floats along the air;
For all the bloomy orchards glow
As with a fall of rosy snow.

At page 91—

How flashed the overloaded flowers
With gems, a present from the showers

At page 92—

No! there is danger; all the night
I saw her like a starry light
More lovely in my visions lone
Than in my day-dreams truth she shone.

'Tis naught when on the sun we gaze
If only dazzled by his rays,
But when our eyes his form retain
Some wound to vision must remain.

And again, at page 234, speaking of a slight shock of an earthquake, the earth is said to tremble

As if some wing of passing angel, bound
From sphere to sphere, had brushed the golden chain
That hangs our planet to the throne of God.

This latter passage, however, is, perhaps, not altogether original with Mr. Ward. In a poem now lying before us, entitled "Al Aaraaf," the composition of a gentleman of Philadelphia, we find what follows:

A dome by link'd light from heaven let down
Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
A window of one circular diamond there
Looked out above into the purple air,
And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
And hallow'd all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between th' Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.

But if Mr. Ward's imagery is, indeed, at rare intervals, good, it must be granted, on the other hand, that, in general, it is atrociously inappropriate, or low. For example:

Thou gaping chasm! whose wide devouring throat
Swallows a river, *while the gulping note*
Of monstrous deglutition gurgles loud, etc. *Page* 24.
Bright Beauty! child of starry birth,
The grace, the gem, the flower of earth
The *damask livery* of Heaven! *Page* 44.

Here the mind wavers between gems, and stars, and taffety—between footmen and flowers. Again, at page 46—

All thornless flowers of wit, all chaste
And delicate essays of taste,
All playful fancies, winged wiles,
That from their pinions scatter smiles,
All prompt resource in stress or pain,
Leap ready-armed from woman's brain.

The idea of "thornless flowers," etc., leaping "*ready-armed*" could have entered few brains except those of Mr. Ward.

Of the most ineffable *bad taste* we have instances without number. For example—page 183—

And, straining, fastens on her lips a kiss
That seemed to *suck the life-blood from her heart!*

And here, very gravely, at page 25—

Again he's rous'd, *first cramming in his cheek*
The weed, though vile, that props the nerves when weak.

Here again, at page 33—

Full well he knew where food does not refresh,
The shrivel'd soul sinks inward with the flesh—
That he's best armed for danger's rash career,
Who's crammed so full there is no room for fear.

But we doubt if the whole world of literature, poetical or prosaic, can afford a picture more utterly *disgusting* than the following, which we quote from page 177:

But most of all good eating cheers the brain,
  Where other joys are rarely met—at sea—
Unless, indeed, we lose as soon as gain—
  Ay, there's the rub, so baffling oft to me.
Boiled, roast, and baked—*what precious choice of dishes*
  My generous throat has shared among the fishes!

'Tis sweet to leave, in each forsaken spot,
Our foot-prints there—if only in the sand;
'Tis sweet to feel we are not all forgot,
That some will weep our flight from every land;
And sweet the knowledge, when the seas I cross,
My briny messmates! ye will mourn my loss.

This passage alone should damn the book—ay, damn a dozen such.

Of what may be termed the *niaiseries*—the silliNesses—of the volume, there is no end. Under this head we might quote two thirds of the work. For example:

Now lightning, with convulsive spasm
Splits heaven *in many a* fearful chasm....

It takes the high trees by the hair
And, as with *besoms*, sweeps the air.....
Now breaks the gloom and through the *chinks*
The moon, in search of opening, *winks*—

All seriously urged, at different points of page 66. Again, on the very next page—

Bees buzzed and wrens that throng'd the rushes
Poured round incessant twittering gushes.

And here, at page 129—

And now he leads her to the slippery brink
Where ponderous tides headlong plunge down
the horrid *chink*.

And here, page 109—

And, like a ravenous vulture, *peck*
The smoothness of that cheek and neck.

And here, page 111—

While through the skin worms *wriggling* broke.

And here, page 170—

> And ride the *skittish* backs of untamed waves.

And here, page 214—

> Now clasps its mate in holy prayer
> Or *twangs* a harp of gold.

Mr. Ward, also, is constantly talking about "thunder-guns," "thunder-trumpets," and "thunder-shrieks." He has a bad habit, too, of styling an eye "a weeper," as for example, at page 208—

> Oh, curl in smiles that mouth again
> And wipe that *weeper* dry.

Somewhere else he calls two tears "two sparklers" —very much in the style of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who was fond of denominating Madeira "the rosy." "In the nick," meaning in the height, or fulness, is likewise a pet expression of the author of "The Great Descender." Speaking of American forests at page 286, for instance, he says, "let the doubter walk through them in the nick of their glory." A phrase which may be considered as in the very nick of good taste.

We cannot pause to comment upon Mr. Ward's most extraordinary system of versification. *Is* it his own? He has quite an original way of conglomerating consonants, and seems to have been experimenting whether it were not possible to do altogether without vowels. Sometimes he strings together quite a chain of impossibilities. The line, for example, at page 51,

> Or, only such as sea-shells flash,

puts us much in mind of the schoolboy stumbling-block, beginning, "The cat ran up the ladder with a lump of raw liver in her mouth," and we defy Sam

Patch himself to pronounce it twice in succession without tumbling into a blunder.

But we are fairly wearied with this absurd theme. *Who* calls Mr. Ward a poet? He is a second-rate, or a third-rate, or perhaps a ninety-ninth-rate poet-aster. He is a gentleman of "elegant leisure," and gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus. Similar opinions, we believe, were expressed by somebody else—was it Mr. Benjamin?—no very long while ago. But neither Mr. Ward nor "The Knicker-bocker" would be convinced. The latter, by way of defence, went into a treatise upon Sam Patch, and Mr. Ward, "in the nick of his glory," wrote another poem against criticism in general, in which he called Mr. Benjamin "a wasp" and "an owl," and en-deavored to prove him an ass. An owl is a wise bird—especially in spectacles—still, we do not look upon Mr. Benjamin as an owl. If all are owls who disbelieve in this book, (which we now throw to the pigs) then the world at large cuts a pretty figure, indeed, and should be burnt up in April, as Mr. Miller desires—for it is only one immense aviary of owls.

WILLIAM W. LORD*

OF MR. LORD we know nothing—although we believe that he is a student at Princeton College—or perhaps a graduate, or perhaps a Professor of that institution. Of his book, lately, we have heard a good deal—that is to say, we have heard it announced in every possible variation of phrase, as "forthcoming." For several months past, indeed, much amusement has been occasioned in the various literary coteries in New York, by the pertinacity and obviousness of an attempt made by the poet's friends to get up an anticipatory excitement in his favor. There were multitudinous dark rumors of something *in posse*—whispered insinuations that the sun had at length arisen or would certainly arise—that a book was really in press which would revolutionize the poetical world—that the MS. had been submitted to the inspection of a junto of critics, whose fiat was well understood to be Fate, (Mr. Charles King, if we remember aright, forming one of the junto)—that the work had by them been approved, and its successful reception and illimitable glorification assured.—Mr. Longfellow, in consequence, countermanding an order given his publishers (Redding & Co.,) to issue forthwith a new three penny edition of "The Voices of the Night." Suggestions of this nature, busily circulated in private, were, in good time, insinuated through the press, until at length the public expectation was as much on tiptoe as public expectation, in America, can ever

*Poems. By William W. Lord. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

be expected to be about so small a matter as the issue of a volume of American poems. The climax of this whole effort, however, at forestalling the critical opinion, and by far the most injudicious portion of the procedure, was the publisher's announcement of the forthcoming book as "a very remarkable volume of poems."

The fact is, the only remarkable things about Mr. Lord's compositions, are their remarkable conceit, ignorance, impudence, platitude, stupidity and bombast:—we are sorry to say all this, but there is an old adage about the falling of the Heavens. Nor must we be misunderstood. We intend to wrong neither Mr. Lord nor our own conscience, by denying him particular merits—such as they are. His book is *not* altogether contemptible—although the conduct of his friends has innoculated nine-tenths of the community with the opinion that it is—but what we wish to say is, that "remarkable" is by no means the epithet to be applied, in the way of commendation, either to anything that he has yet done, or to anything that he may hereafter accomplish. In a word, while he has undoubtedly given proof of a very ordinary species of talent, no man whose opinion is entitled to the slightest respect, will admit in him any indication of genius.

The "particular merits" to which, in the case of Mr. Lord, we have allusion, are merely the accidental merits of particular passages. We say *accidental*—because poetical merit which is not simply an accident, is very sure to be found, more or less, in a state of *diffusion* throughout a poem. No man is entitled to the sacred name of poet, because from 160 pages of doggerel, may be culled a few sentences of worth. Nor would the case be in any respect altered, if these few sentences, or even if a few

passages of length, were of an excellence even supreme. For a poet is necessarily a man of genius, and with the spirit of true genius even its veriest common-places are intertwined and inextricably intertangled. When, therefore, amid a Sahara of platitude, we discover an occasional Oasis, we must not so far forget ourselves as to fancy any latent fertility in the sands. It is our purpose, however, to do the fullest justice to Mr. Lord, and we proceed at once to cull from his book whatever, in our opinion, will put in the fairest light his poetical pretensions.

And first we extract the *one* brief passage which aroused in us what we recognized as the Poetical Sentiment. It occurs, at page 94, in "Saint Mary's Gift," which, although excessively unoriginal at all points, is upon the whole, the least reprehensible poem of the volume. The heroine of the story having taken a sleeping draught, after the manner of Juliet, is conveyed to a vault, (still in the same manner) and (still in the same manner) awakes in the presence of her lover, who comes to gaze on what he supposes her corpse:

> And each unto the other was a dream;
> And so they gazed without a stir or breath,
> *Until her head into the golden stream*
> *Of her wide tresses, loosened from their wreath,*
> *Sank back, as she did yield again to death.*

At page 3, in a composition of much general *eloquence*, there occur a few lines of which we should not hesitate to speak enthusiastically were we not perfectly aware that Mr. Lord has no claim to their origination:

> ———Ye winds
> That in the impalpable deep caves of air,
> *Moving your silent plumes, in dreams of flight,*
> *Tumultuous lie*, and from your half-stretched wings
> Beat the faint zephyrs that disturb the air!

At page 6, in the same poem, we meet also, a passage of high merit, although sadly disfigured:

> Thee the bright host of Heaven,
> The stars adore:—a thousand altars, fed
> By pure unwearied hands, like cressets blaze
> In the blue depths of night; nor all unseen
> In the pale sky of day, with tempered light
> Burn *radiant of thy praise.*

The disfiguration to which we allude, lies in the making a blazing altar burn merely like a blazing cresset—a simile about as forcible as would be the likening an apple to a pear, or the seafoam to the froth on a pitcher of Burton's ale.

At page 7, still in the same poem, we find some verses which are very quotable, and will serve to make our readers understand what we mean by the eloquence of the piece:

> Great Worshipper! hast thou no thought of Him
> Who gave the Sun his brightness, winged the winds,
> And on the everlasting deep bestowed
> Its voiceless thunder—spread its fields of blue,
> And made them glorious *like an inner sky*
> *From which the islands rise like steadfast clouds,*
> How beautiful! who gemmed thy zone with stars,
> Around thee threw his own cerulean robe,—
> And bent his coronal about thy brows,
> Shaped of the seven splendors of the light—
> Piled up the mountains for thy throne; and thee
> The image of His beauty made and power,
> And gave thee to be sharer of His state,
> His majesty, His glory, and His fear!

We extract this *not* because we like it ourselves, but because we take it for granted that there are many who will, and that Mr. Lord himself would desire us to extract it as a specimen of his *power*. The "Great worshipper" is Nature. We disapprove, however, the man-milliner method in which she is tricked

out, item by item. The "How beautiful!" should be understood, we fancy, as an expression of admiration on the part of Mr. Lord, for the fine idea which immediately precedes—the idea which we have italicized. It is, in fact, by no means destitute of force—but we have met it before.

At page 70, there are two stanzas addressed to "My Sister." The first of these we cite as the best thing of equal length to be found in the book. Its conclusion is particularly noble.

> And shall we meet in heaven, and know and love?
> Do human feelings in that world above
> Unchanged survive? blest thought! but ah, I fear
> That thou, dear sister, in some other sphere,
> Distant from mine will (wilt) find a brighter home,
> Where I, unworthy found, may never come:—
> Or be so high above me glorified,
> *That I a meaner angel, undescried,*
> *Seeking thine eyes, such love alone shall see*
> *As angels give to all bestowed on me;*
> *And when my voice upon thy ear shall fall,*
> *Hear only such reply as angels give to all.*

We give the lines as they are: their grammatical construction is faulty; and the punctuation of the ninth line renders the sense equivocal.

Of that species of composition which comes most appropriately under the head, *Drivel*, we should have no trouble in selecting as many specimens as our readers could desire. We will afflict them with one or two:

SONG

> O soft is the ringdove's eye of love
> When her mate returns from a weary flight;
> And brightest of all the stars above
> Is the one bright star that leads the night.

But softer thine eye than the dove's by far,
When of friendship and pity thou speakest to me;
And brighter, O brighter, than eve's one star
When of love, sweet maid, I speak to thee.

Here is another

SONG

Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That never loved before
Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That heart can love no more.

As the rose was in the bud, love,
Ere it opened into sight,
As yon star in drumlie daylight
Behind the blue was bright—

So thine image in my heart, love,
As pure, as bright, as fair,
Thyself unseen, unheeded,
I saw and loved it there.

Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee
As heart ne'er loved before;
Oh, a heart, it loves, loves, loves thee,
That heart can love no more.

In the "Widow's Complaint" we are entertained after this fashion:

And what are these children
I once thought my own,
What now do they seem
But his orphans alone?

In "The New Castalia" we have it thus:

Then a pallid beauteous maiden
Golden ghastly robes arrayed in
Such a wonderous strain displayed in,
In a wonderous song of Aidenne,
That all the gods and goddesses
Shook their golden yellow tresses,
Parnassus' self made half afraid in.

Just above this there is something about aged beldames dreaming

> ——of white throats sweetly jagged
> With a ragged butch-knife dull,
> And of night-mares neighing, weighing,
> On a sleeper's bosom *squatting*.

But in mercy to our readers we forbear.

Mr. Lord is never elevated above the dead level of his habitual platitude, by even the happiest thesis in the world. That any man could, at one and the same time, fancy himself a poet and string together as many pitiable inanities as we see here, on so truly suggestive a thesis as that of "A Lady taking the Veil," is to our apprehension a miracle of miracles. The idea would seem to be, of itself, sufficient to elicit fire from ice—to breathe animation into the most stolid of stone. Mr. Lord winds up a dissertation on the subject by the patronizing advice—

> Ere thou, irrevocable, to that dark creed
> Art yielded, *think*, *Oh Lady*, *think again*.

the whole of which would read better if it were

> Ere thou, irrevocable, to this d—d doggerel
> Art yielded, Lord, think! think!—ah think again.

Even with the great theme, Niagara, our poet fails in his obvious effort to work himself into a fit of inspiration. One of his poems has for title "A Hymn to Niagara"—but from beginning to end it is nothing more than a very silly "Hymn to Mr. Lord." Instead of describing the fall (as well as any Mr. Lord could be supposed to describe it) he rants about what *I* feel here, and about what *I* did not feel there —till at last the figure of little Mr. Lord, in the shape of a great capital I gets so thoroughly in between the

reader and the waterfall that not a particle of the latter is to be discovered. At one point the poet directs his soul to issue a proclamation as follows:

> Proclaim, my soul, proclaim it to the sky!
> And tell the stars, and tell the hills whose feet
> Are in the depth of earth, their peaks in heaven,
> And tell the Ocean's old familiar face
> Beheld by day and night, in calm and storm,
> That they nor aught beside in earth or heaven,
> Like thee, tremendous torrent, have so filled
> *Its* thought of beauty, and so awed with might!

The "*Its*" has reference to the soul of Mr. Lord, who thinks it necessary to issue a proclamation to the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face—lest the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face should chance to be unaware of the fact that it, (the soul of Mr. Lord,) admitted the waterfall to be a fine thing—but whether the cataract for the compliment, or the stars for the information, are to be considered the party chiefly obliged —that, for the life of us, we cannot tell.

From the "first impression" of the cataract, he says:

> At length my soul awaked—waked not again
> To be o'erpressed, o'ermastered, and engulphed,
> But of itself possessed, o'er all without
> Felt conscious mastery!
>
> And then
> Retired within, and self-withdrawn, I stood
> The two-fold centre and informing soul
> Of one vast harmony of sights and sounds,
> And from that deep abyss, that rock-built shrine,
> Though mute my own frail voice, I poured a hymn
> Of "praise and gratulation" like the noise
> Of banded angels when they shout to wake
> Empyreal echoes!

That so vast a personage as Mr. Lord should not be o'ermastered by the cataract, but feel "conscious mastery over all without"—and over all within, too —is certainly nothing more than reasonable and proper—but then he should have left the detail of these little facts to the cataract or to some other uninterested individual—even Cicero has been held to blame for a want of modesty—and although, to be sure, Cicero was not Mr. Lord, still Mr. Lord may be in danger of blame. He may have enemies (*very* little men!) who will pretend to deny that the "hymn of praise and gratulation" (if *this* is the hymn) bears at all points more than a partial resemblance to the "noise of banded angels when they shout to wake empyreal echoes." Not that *we* intend to deny it—but *they* will:—they are *very* little people and they *will*.

We have said that the "remarkable" feature, or at least one of the "remarkable" features of this volume is its platitude—its flatness. Whenever the reader meets anything not decidedly flat, he may take it for granted at once, that it is stolen. When the poet speaks, for example, at page 148, of

> Flowers, of young poets the first words—

who can fail to remember the line in the Merry Wives of Windsor.

> Fairies use flowers for their charactery?

At page 10 he says:

> Great oaks their heavenward lifted arms stretch forth
> In suppliance!

The same thought will be found in "Pelham," where the author is describing the dead tree beneath

which is committed the murder. The grossest plagiarisms, indeed, abound. We would have no trouble, even, in pointing out a score from our most unimportant self. At page 27, Mr. Lord says:

They, albeit with inward pain
Who thought to sing thy dirge, must sing thy Pæan!

In a poem called "Lenore," we have it

Avaunt! to-night my heart is light—no dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days.

At page 13, Mr. Lord says of certain flowers that

Ere beheld on Earth they gardened Heaven!

We print it as printed—note of admiration and all. In a poem called "Al Aaraaf" we have it thus:

————A gemmy flower,
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it shamed
All other loveliness:—'twas dropped from Heaven
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond.

At page 57, Mr. Lord says:

On the old and haunted mountain,
There in dreams I dared to climb,
Where the clear Castalian fountain
(Silver fountain) ever tinkling
All the green around it sprinkling
Makes perpetual rhyme—
To my dream enchanted, golden,
Came a vision of the olden
Long-forgotten time.

There are no doubt many of our friends who will remember the commencement of our "Haunted Palace."

In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace
(Radiant palace) reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion
It stood there.
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair.
Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow—
This—all this—was in the olden
Time, long ago.

At page 60, Mr. Lord says:

And the aged beldames napping,
Dreamed of gently rapping, rapping,
With a hammer gently tapping,
Tapping on an infant's skull.

In "The Raven," we have it:

While I pondered nearly napping,
Suddenly there came a rapping,
As of some one gently tapping,
Tapping at my chamber door.

But it is folly to pursue these thefts. As to any property of our own, Mr. Lord is very cordially welcome to whatever use he can make of it. But others may not be so pacifically disposed, and the book before us might be very materially thinned and reduced in cost, by discarding from it all that belongs to Miss Barrett, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, Proctor, Longfellow and Lowell—the very class of poets, by the way, whom Mr. William W. Lord, in his "New Castalia" the most especially affects to satirize and to contemn.

It has been rumored, we say, or rather it has been *announced* that Mr. Lord is a graduate or perhaps a Professor of Princeton College—but we have had

much difficulty in believing anything of the kind. The pages before us are not only utterly devoid of that classicism of tone and manner—that better species of classicism which a liberal education never fails to impart—but they abound in the most outrageously vulgar violations of grammar—of prosody in its most extended sense.

Of versification, and all that appertains to it, Mr. Lord is ignorant in the extreme. We doubt if he can tell the difference between a dactyl and an anapæst. In the Heroic (Jambic) Pentameter he is continually introducing such verses as these:

> A faint symphony to Heaven ascending—
> No heart of love, O God, Infinite One—
> Of a thought as weak as aspiration—
> Who were the original priests of this—
> Of grace, magnificence and power—
> O'er whelm me; this darkness that shuts out the sky—

Alexandrines, in the same metre, are encountered at every step—but it is very clear from the points at which they are met, and at which the cæsura is placed, that Mr. Lord has no idea of employing them as Alexandrines:—They are merely excessive, that is to say, defective Pentameters. In a word, judging by his rhythm, we might suppose that the poet could neither see, hear, nor make use of his fingers. We do not know, in America, a versifier so utterly wretched and contemptible.

His most extraordinary sins, however, are in point of English. Here is his dedication, embodied in the very first page of the book:—

"To Professor Albert B. Dod, These Poems, the offspring of an Earnest (if ineffectual) Desire towards the True and Beautiful, which were hardly

my own by Paternity, when they became his by adoption, are inscribed, with all Reverence and Affection, by the Author."

What is anybody to make of all this? What is the meaning of a desire *toward?*—and is it the "True and Beautiful" or the "Poems" which were hardly Mr. Lord's own by paternity before they became his [Mr. Dod's] by adoption."

At page 12. we read:

> Think heedless one, or who with wanton step
> *Tramples* the flowers.

At page 75, within the compass of eleven lines, we have three of the grossest blunders:

> Oh Thou for whom as in thyself Thou art,
> And by thyself perceived, we know no name,
> *Nor* dare *not* seek to express—but unto us,
> Adonai! who before the heavens were built
> Or Earth's foundation laid, within thyself,
> Thine own most glorious habitation *dwelt*,
> But when within the abyss,
> With sudden light illuminated,
> Thou, thine image to behold,
> Into its quickened depths
> *Looked* down with brooding eye!

At page 79, we read:

> But ah! my heart, unduteous to my will,
> Breathes only sadness; like an instrument
> From whose quick strings, when hands devoid of skill
> Solicit joy, *they* murmur and lament.

At page 86, is something even grosser than this:

> And still and rapt as pictured Saint might be
> *Like saint-like* seemed as *her* she did adore.

At page 129, there is a similar error:

> With half-closed eyes and ruffled feathers known
> As *them* that fly not with the changing year.

At page 128, we find—

> And thou didst dwell therein so truly loved
> As none have been nor shall be loved again,
> And yet *perceived* not, &c.

At page 155, we have—

> But yet it may not cannot be
> That thou at length *hath* sunk to rest.

Invariably Mr. Lord writes didst did'st; couldst could'st, &c. The fact is he is absurdly ignorant of the commonest principles of grammar—and the only excuse we can make to our readers for annoying them with specifications in this respect is that, without the specifications we should never have been believed.

But enough of this folly. We are heartily tired of the book, and thoroughly disgusted with the impudence of the parties who have been aiding and abetting in thrusting it before the public. To the poet himself we have only to say—from any farther specimens of your stupidity, good Lord deliver us!

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

MR. BRYANT'S position in the poetical world is, perhaps, better settled than that of any American. There is less difference of opinion about his rank; but, as usual, the agreement is more decided in private literary circles than in what appears to be the public expression of sentiment as gleaned from the press. I may as well observe here, too, that this coincidence of opinion in private circles is in all cases very noticeable when compared with the discrepancy of the apparent public opinion. In private it is quite a rare thing to find any strongly-marked disagreement—I mean, of course, about mere autorial merit. The author accustomed to seclusion, and mingling for the first time freely with the literary people about him, is invariably startled and delighted to find that the decisions of his own unbiased judgment—decisions to which he has refrained from giving voice on account of their broad contradiction to the decision of the press—are sustained and considered quite as matters of course by almost every person with whom he converses. The fact is, that when brought face to face with each other, we are constrained to a certain amount of honesty by the sheer trouble it causes us to mould the countenance to a lie. We put on paper with a grave air what we could not for our lives assert personally to a friend without either blushing or laughing outright. That the opinion of the press is not an honest opinion, that necessarily it is impossible that it should be an

honest opinion, is never denied by the members of the press themselves. Individual presses, of course, are now and then honest, but I speak of the combined effect. Indeed, it would be difficult for those conversant with the *modus operandi* of public journals to deny the general falsity of impression conveyed. Let in America a book be published by an unknown, careless or uninfluential author; if he publishes it "on his own account," he will be confounded at finding that no notice of it is taken at all. If it has been entrusted to a publisher of *caste*, there will appear forthwith in each of the leading *business* papers a variously-phrased *critique* to the extent of three or four lines, and to the effect that "we have received, from the fertile press of So and So, a volume entitled This and That, which appears to be well worthy persual, and which is 'got up' in the customary neat style of the enterprising firm of So and So." On the other hand, let our author have acquired influence, experience, or (what will stand him in good stead of either) effrontery, on the issue of his book he will obtain from his publisher a hundred copies (or more, as the case may be,) "for distribution among friends connected with the press." Armed with these, he will call personally either at the office or (if he understands his game) at the private residence of every editor within his reach, enter into conversation, compliment the journalist, interest him, as if incidentally, in the subject of the book, and finally, watching an opportunity, beg leave to hand him "a volume which, quite opportunely, is on the very matter now under discussion." If the editor seems sufficiently interested, the rest is left to fate; but if there is any lukewarmness, (usually indicated by a polite regret on the editor's part that he really has "no time to render the work that justice which

its importance demands,") then our author is prepared to understand and to sympathize; has, luckily, a friend thoroughly conversant with the topic, and who (perhaps) could be persuaded to write some account of the volume—provided that the editor would be kind enough just to glance over the *critique* and amend it in accordance with his own particular views. Glad to fill half a column or so of his editorial space, and still more glad to get rid of his visitor, the journalist assents. The author retires, consults the friend, instructs him touching the strong points of the volume, and insinuating in *some* shape a *quid pro quo*, gets an elaborate *critique* written, (or, what is more usual and far more simple, writes it himself,) and his business in this individual quarter is accomplished. Nothing more than sheer impudence is requisite to accomplish it in all.

Now the effect of this system (for it has really grown to be such) is obvious. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, men of genius, too indolent and careless about worldly concerns to bestir themselves after this fashion, have also that pride of intellect which would prevent them, under any circumstances, from even insinuating, by the presentation of a book to a member of the press, a desire to have that book reviewed. They, consequently, and their works, are utterly overwhelmed and extinguished in the flood of the *apparent* public adulation upon which in gilded barges are borne triumphant the ingenious toady and the diligent quack.

In general, the books of the toadies and quacks, not being read at all, are safe from any contradiction of this self-bestowed praise; but now and then it happens that the excess of the laudation works out in part its own remedy. Men of leisure, hearing one of the toady works commended, look at it, read its

preface and a few pages of its body, and throw it aside with disgust, wondering at the ill taste of the *editors* who extol it. But there is an iteration, and then a continuous reiteration of the panegyric, till these men of leisure begin to suspect themselves in the wrong, to fancy that there may really be something good lying *perdu* in the volume. In a fit of desperate curiosity they read it through critically, their indignation growing hotter at each succeeding page till it gets the better even of contempt. The result is, that reviews now appear in various quarters entirely at variance with the opinions so generally expressed, and which, but for these indignation reviews, would have passed universally current as the opinion of the public. It is in this manner that those gross *seeming* discrepancies arise which so often astonish us, but which vanish instantaneously in private society.

But although it may be said, in general, that Mr. Bryant's position is *comparatively* well settled, still for some time past there has been a growing tendency to under-estimate him. The new licentious "schools" of poetry—I do not now speak of the transcendentalists, who are the merest nobodies, fatiguing even themselves—but the Tennysonian and Barrettian schools, having, in their rashness of spirit, much in accordance with the whole spirit of the age, thrown into the shade necessarily all that seems akin to the conservatism of half a century ago. The conventionalities, even the most justifiable *decora* of composition, are regarded, *per se*, with a suspicious eye. When I say *per se*, I mean that, from finding them so long in connexion with conservatism of thought, we have come at last to dislike them, not merely as the outward visible signs of that conservatism, but as things evil in themselves. It is

very clear that those accuracies and elegancies of style, and of general manner, which in the time of Pope were considered as *prima facie* and indispensable indications of genius, are now conversely regarded. How few are willing to admit the possibility of reconciling genius with artistic skill! Yet this reconciliation is not only possible, but an absolute necessity. It is a mere prejudice which has hitherto prevented the union, by studiously insisting upon a natural repulsion which not only does not exist, but which is at war with all the analogies of nature. The greatest poems will not be written until this prejudice is annihilated; and I mean to express a very exalted opinion of Mr. Bryant when I say that his works in time to come will do much towards the annihilation.

I have never disbelieved in the perfect consistency, and even congeniality, of the highest genius and the profoundest art; but in the case of the author of "The Ages," I *have* fallen into the general error of undervaluing his poetic ability on account of the mere "elegancies and accuracies" to which allusion has already been made. I confess that, with an absolute abstraction from all personal feelings, and with the most sincere intention to do justice, I was at one period beguiled into this popular error; there can be no difficulty, therefore, on my part, in excusing the inadvertence in others.

It will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the loftiest order, but there has been latterly, since the days of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell, a growing disposition to deny him *genius* in *any* respect. He is now commonly spoken of as "a man of high poetical *talent*, very '*correct*,' with a warm appreciation of the beauty of nature and great descriptive powers, but rather too much of the old-school manner of

Cowper, Goldsmith and Young." This is the truth, but not the whole truth. Mr. Bryant has genius, and that of a marked character, but it has been overlooked by modern schools, because deficient in those externals which have become in a measure symbolical of those schools.

Dr. Griswold, in summing up his comments on Bryant, has the following significant objections: "His genius is not versatile; he has related no history; he has not sung of the passion of love; he has not described artificial life. Still the tenderness and feeling in 'The Death of the Flowers,' 'Rizpah,' 'The Indian Girl's Lament,' and other pieces, show that he might have excelled in delineations of the gentler passions had he made them his study."

Now, in describing *no* artificial life, in relating *no* history, in *not* singing the passion of love, the poet has merely shown himself the profound artist, has merely evinced a proper consciousness that such are not the legitimate themes of poetry. That they are not, I have repeatedly shown, or attempted to show, and to go over the demonstration now would be foreign to the gossiping and desultory nature of the present article. What Dr. Griswold means by "the gentler passions" is, I presume, not very clear to himself, but it is possible that he employs the phrase in consequence of the gentle, unpassionate emotion induced by the poems of which he quotes the titles. It is precisely this "unpassionate emotion" which is the limit of the true poetical art. Passion proper and poesy are discordant. Poetry, in elevating, tranquilizes *the soul*. With *the heart* it has nothing to do. For a fuller explanation of these views I refer the reader to an analysis of a poem by Mrs. Welby—an analysis contained in an article called

"Marginalia," and published about a year ago in "The Democratic Review."

The editor of "The Poets and Poetry of America" thinks the literary precocity of Bryant remarkable. "There are few recorded *more* remarkable," he says. The first edition of "The Embargo" was in 1808, and the poet was born in 1794; he was more than thirteen, then, when the satire was printed—although it is reported to have been written a year earlier. I quote a few lines.

> Oh, might some patriot rise, the gloom dispel,
> Chase Error's mist and break the magic spell!
> But vain the wish; for, hark! the murmuring meed
> Of hoarse applause from yonder shed proceed.
> Enter and view the thronging concourse there,
> Intent with gaping mouth and stupid stare;
> While in the midst their supple leader stands,
> Harangues aloud and flourishes his hands,
> To adulation tunes his servile throat,
> And sues successful for each blockhead's vote.

This is a fair specimen of the whole, both as regards its satirical and rhythmical power. A satire is, of course, no *poem*. I have known boys of an earlier age do better things, although the case is rare. All depends upon the course of education. Bryant's father "was familiar with the best English literature, and perceiving in his son indications of superior genius, attended carefully to his instruction, taught him the art of composition, and guided his literary taste." This being understood, the marvel of such verse as I have quoted ceases at once, even admitting it to be thoroughly the boy's own work; but it is difficult to make any such admission. The father *must* have suggested, revised, retouched.

The longest poem of Bryant is "The Ages"—thirty-five Spenserian stanzas. It is the one im-

proper theme of its author. The design is, "from a survey of the past ages of the world, and of the successive advances of mankind in knowledge and virtue, to justify and confirm the hopes of the philanthropist for the future destinies of the human race." All this would have been more rationally, because more effectually, accomplished in prose. Dismissing it as a poem, (which in its general tendency it is not,) one might commend the force of its argumentation but for the radical error of deducing a hope of *progression* from the *cycles* of physical nature.

The sixth stanza is a specimen of noble versification (within the narrow limits of the Iambic Pentameter).

> Look on this beautiful world and read the truth
> In her fair page; see, every season brings
> New change in her of everlasting youth;
> Still the green soil with joyous living things
> Swarms; the wide air is full of joyous wings;
> And myriads still are happy in the sleep
> Of Ocean's azure gulfs and where he flings
> The restless surge. Eternal Love doth keep
> In his complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep.

The cadences here at *page*, *swarms* and *surge*, cannot be surpassed. There are comparatively few consonants. Liquids and the softer vowels abound, and the partial line after the pause at "surge," with the stately march of the succeeding Alexandrine, is one of the finest conceivable *finales*.

The poem, in general, has unity, completeness. Its tone of calm, elevated and hopeful contemplation, is well sustained throughout. There is an occasional quaint grace of expression, as in

> Nurse of full streams and lifter up of proud
> Sky-mingling mountains that o'erlook the cloud;

or of antithetical and rhythmical force combined, as in

> The shock that hurled
> To dust, in many fragments dashed and strown
> The throne whose roots were in another world
> And whose far-stretching shadow awed our own.

But we look in vain for anything more worthy commendation.

"Thanatopsis" is the poem by which its author is best known, but is by no means his best poem. It owes the *extent* of its celebrity to its nearly absolute freedom from *defect*, in the ordinary understanding of the term. I mean to say that its negative merit recommends it to the public attention. It is a thoughtful, well phrased, well constructed, well versified poem. The concluding thought is exceedingly noble, and has done wonders for the success of the whole composition.

"The Waterfowl" is very beautiful, but like "Thanatopsis," owes a great deal to its completeness and pointed termination.

"Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids!" will strike every poet as the truest *poem* written by Bryant. It is richly ideal.

"June" is sweet and perfectly well modulated in its rhythm, and inexpressibly pathetic. It serves well to illustrate my previous remarks about passion in its connexion with poetry. In "June" there is, very properly, nothing of the intense *passion* of grief, but the subdued sorrow which comes up, as if perforce, to the surface of the poet's gay sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul, while there is yet a spiritual *elevation* in the thrill.

And what if cheerful shouts at noon
Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids beneath the moon
With fairy laughter blent?
And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
Of my low monument?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.
I know—I know I should not see
The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me
Nor its wild music flow;
But if around my place of sleep
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go:—
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom,
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

The thoughts here belong to the highest class of poetry, the imaginative-natural, and are of themselves sufficient to stamp their author a man of genius.

I copy at random a few passages of similar cast, inducing a similar conviction.

The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,
A nearer vault and of a tenderer blue
Than that which bends above the eastern hills.....

Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked and wooed
In a foregotten language and *old tunes*
From instruments of unremembered form
Gave the soft winds a voice.....

Breezes of the south,
That toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie hawk, that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not.....

On the breast of earth
I lie, and listen to her mighty voice—
A voice of many tones sent up from streams
That wander through the gloom, from woods unseen;
Swayed by the sweeping of the tides of air;
From rocky chasms where darkness dwells all day
And hollows of the great invisible hills,
And sands that edge the ocean, stretching far
Into the night—a melancholy sound!....

All the green herbs
Are stirring in his breath; *a thousand flowers*
By the road side and the borders of the brook,
Nod gayly to each other.

[There is a fine "echo of sound to sense" in "the borders of the brook," etc.; and in the same poem from which these lines are taken, ("The Summer Wind,") may be found two other equally happy examples, *e. g.*

For me, I lie
Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf,
Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun,
Retains some freshness.

And again—

All is silent, save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing.

I resume the imaginative extracts.]

Paths, homes, graves, ruins from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.....
And the blue gentian flower that in the breeze
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.....
A shoot of that old vine that made
The nations silent in the shade.....
But 'neath yon crimson tree,
Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame,
Nor mark, within its roseate canopy,
Her flush of maiden shame.....

The mountains that infold,
In their wild sweep, the colored landscape round,
Seem *groups of giant kings in purple and gold*
That guard the enchanted ground.

[This latter passage is especially beautiful. Happily to endow inanimate nature with sentience and a capability of action, is one of the severest tests of the poet.]

....There is a power whose care
Teaches thy way along *that pathless coast,*
The desert and illimitable air.
Lone, wandering, but not lost.....

Pleasant shall be thy way, *where weekly bows*
The shutting flowers and darkling waters pass,
And 'twixt the o'ershadowing branches and the grass....

Sweet odors in the sea air, sweet and strange,
Shall tell the home-sick mariner of the shore,
And, listening to thy murmur, he shall deem
He hears the rustling leaf and running stream.....

In a "Sonnet, To——," are some richly imaginative lines. I quote the whole.

Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long: another spring
Shall deck her for men's eyes, but not for thine,
Sealed in a sleep which knows no waking.
The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed are no mineral of power;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.
Glide softly to thy rest, then: death should come
Gently to one of gentle mould like thee,
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom,
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree,
Close thy sweet eyes calmly and without pain,
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

The happiest *finale* to these brief extracts will be the magnificent conclusion of "Thanatopsis."

> So live, that, when thy summons comes to join
> *The innumerable caravan that moves*
> *To that mysterious realm where each shall take*
> *His chamber in the silent halls of death,*
> Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
> Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave—
> *Like one that draws the drapery of his couch*
> *About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.*

In the minor morals of the muse Mr. Bryant excels. In versification (*as far as he goes*) he is unsurpassed in America—unless, indeed, by Mr. Sprague. Mr. Longfellow is not so thorough a versifier within Mr. Bryant's limits, but a far better one upon the whole, on account of his greater range. Mr. B., however, is by no means always accurate—or defensible, for accurate is not the term. His lines are occasionally unpronounceable through excess of harsh consonants, as in

> As if they loved to breast the breeze that sweeps the cool clear sky.

Now and then he gets out of his depth in attempting anapæstic rhythm, of which he makes sad havoc, as in

> And Rispah, once the loveliest of all
> That bloomed and smiled in the court of Saul.

Not unfrequently, too, even his pentameters are inexcusably rough, as in

> Kind influence. Lo! their orbs burn more bright.

which can only be read metrically by drawing out "influence" into three marked syllables, shortening

the long monosyllable "Lo!" and lengthening the short one "their."

Mr. Bryant is not devoid of mannerisms, one of the most noticeable of which is his use of the epithet "old" preceded by some other adjective, *e. g.*—

> In all that proud old world beyond the deep;
> There is a tale about these gray old rocks;
> The wide old woods resounded with her song;
> And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven,

etc. etc. etc. These duplicates occur so frequently as to excite a smile upon each repetition.

Of merely grammatical errors the poet is rarely guilty. Faulty constructions are more frequently chargeable to him. In "The Massacre of Scio" we read—

> Till the last link of slavery's chain
> Is shivered to be worn no more.

What shall be worn no more? The chain, of course —but the link is implied. It will be understood that I pick these flaws only with difficulty from the poems of Bryant. He is, in the "minor morals," the most generally correct of our poets.

He is now fifty-two years of age. In height, he is, perhaps, five feet nine. His frame is rather robust. His features are large but thin. His countenance is sallow, nearly bloodless. His eyes are piercing gray, deep set, with large projecting eyebrows. His mouth is wide and massive, the expression of the smile hard, cold—even sardonic. The forehead is broad, with prominent organs of ideality; a good deal bald; the hair thin and grayish, as are also the whiskers, which he wears in a simple style. His bearing is quite distinguished, full of the aristocracy of intellect. In general, he looks in better

health than before his last visit to England. He seems active—physically and morally energetic. His dress is plain to the extreme of simplicity, although of late there is a certain degree of Anglicism about it.

In character no man stands more loftily than Bryant. The peculiarly melancholy expression of his countenance has caused him to be accused of harshness, or coldness of heart. Never was there a greater mistake. His soul is charity itself, in all respects generous and noble. His manners are undoubtedly reserved.

Of late days he has nearly, if not altogether abandoned literary pursuits, although still editing, with unabated vigor, "The New York Evening Post." He is married, (Mrs. Bryant still living,) has two daughters, (one of them Mrs. Parke Godwin,) and is residing for the present at Vice-Chancellor McCown's, near the junction of Warren and Church streets.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE*

THE reputation of the author of "Twice-Told Tales" has been confined, until very lately, to literary society; and I have not been wrong, perhaps, in citing him as *the* example, *par excellence*, in this country, of the privately-admired and publicly-unappreciated man of genius. Within the last year or two, it is true, an occasional critic has been urged, by honest indignation, into very warm approval. Mr. Webber, for instance, (than whom no one has a keener relish for that kind of writing which Mr. Hawthorne has best illustrated,) gave us, in a late number of "The American Review," a cordial and certainly a full tribute to his talents; and since the issue of the "Mosses from an Old Manse," criticisms of similar tone have been by no means infrequent in our more authoritative journals. I can call to mind few reviews of Hawthorne published *before* the "Mosses." One I remember in "Arcturus" (edited by Matthews and Duyckinck) for May, 1841; another in the "American Monthly" (edited by Hoffman and Herbert) for March, 1838; a third in the ninety-sixth number of the "North American Review." These criticisms, however, seemed to have little effect on the popular taste—at least, if we are to form any idea of the popular taste by reference to its expression in the newspapers, or by the sale of the author's book. It

*Twice-Told Tales. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. James Munroe & Co., Boston. 1842.

Mosses from an Old Manse. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. Wiley & Putnam. New York. 1846

was never the fashion (until lately) to speak of him in any summary of our best authors.

The daily critics would say, on such occasions, "Is there not Irving and Cooper, and Bryant, and Paulding, and—Smith?" or, "Have we not Halleck and Dana, and Longfellow, and—Thompson?" or, "Can we not point triumphantly to our own Sprague, Willis, Channing, Bancroft, Prescott and—Jenkins?" but these unanswerable queries were never wound up by the name of Hawthorne.

Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred—from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a quack; but these are insufficient to account for the whole effect. No small portion of it is attributable to the very marked idiosyncrasy of Mr. Hawthorne himself. In one sense, and in great measure, to be peculiar is to be original, and than the true originality there is no higher literary virtue. This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform, but the continuous peculiarity—a peculiarity springing from ever-active vigor of fancy—better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character to everything it touches, and, especially, *self impelled to touch everything.*

It is often said, inconsiderately, that very original writers always fail in popularity—that such and such persons are too original to be comprehended by the mass. "Too peculiar," should be the phrase, "too idiosyncratic." It is, in fact, the excitable, undisciplined and child-like popular mind which most keenly feels the original.

The criticism of the conservatives, of the hackneys, of the cultivated old clergymen of the "North American Review," is precisely the criticism which

condemns and alone condemns it. "It becometh not a divine," saith Lord Coke, "to be of a fiery and salamandrine spirit." Their conscience allowing them to move nothing themselves, these dignitaries have a holy horror of being moved. "Give us *quietude*," they say. Opening their mouths with proper caution, they sigh forth the word "*Repose*." And this is, indeed, the one thing they should be permitted to enjoy, if only upon the Christian principle of give and take.

The fact is, that if Mr. Hawthorne were really original, he could not fail of making himself felt by the public. But the fact is, he is *not* original in any sense. Those who speak of him as original, mean nothing more than that he differs in his manner or tone, and in his choice of subjects, from any author of their acquaintance—their acquaintance not extending to the German Tieck, whose manner, in *some* of his works, is absolutely identical with that *habitual* to Hawthorne. But it is clear that the element of the literary originality is novelty. The element of its appreciation by the reader is the reader's sense of the new. Whatever gives him a new and insomuch a pleasurable emotion, he considers original, and whoever frequently gives him such emotion, he considers an original writer. In a word, it is by the sum total of these emotions that he decides upon the writer's claim to originality. I may observe here, however, that there is clearly a point at which even novelty itself would cease to produce the legitimate originality, if we judge this originality, as we should, by the effect designed: this point is that at which *novelty becomes nothing novel;* and here the artist, *to preserve his originality*, will subside into the commonplace. No one, I think, has noticed that, merely through inattention to this matter,

Moore has comparatively failed in his "Lalla Rookh." Few readers, and indeed few critics, have commended this poem for originality—and, in fact, the effect, originality, is not produced by it—yet no work of equal size so abounds in the happiest originalities, individually considered. They are so excessive as, in the end, to deaden in the reader all capacity for their appreciation.

These points properly understood, it will be seen that the critic (unacquainted with Tieck) who reads a single tale or essay by Hawthorne, may be justified in thinking him original; but the tone, or manner, or choice of subject, which induces in this critic the sense of the new, will—if not in a second tale, at least in a third and all subsequent ones—not only fail of inducing it, but bring about an exactly antagonistic impression. In concluding a volume, and more especially in concluding all the volumes of the author, the critic will abandon his first design of calling him "original," and content himself with styling him "peculiar."

With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters, only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of *effect* alone which is worth consideration, but that this effect is *best* wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the in-

tellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we least appeal. And thus understood, it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality—true in respect of its purposes—is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of *apparent* novelty, a real egotistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed, (that of the absolute novelty,) is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case, his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and an extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—*and* himself. They two, he fancies, have, alone of all men, thought thus. They two have, together, created this thing. Henceforward there is a bond of sympathy between them—a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book.

There is a species of writing which, with some difficulty, may be admitted as a lower degree of what I have called the true original. In its perusal we say to ourselves, not "how original this is!" nor "here is an idea which I and the author have alone entertained," but "here is a charmingly obvious fancy," or sometimes even, "here is a thought which I am not sure has ever occurred to myself, but which, of course, has occurred to all the

rest of the world." This kind of composition (which still appertains to a high order) is usually designated as "the natural." It has little external resemblance, but strong internal affinity to the true original, if, indeed, as I have suggested, it is not of this latter an inferior degree. It is best exemplified, among English writers, in Addison, Irving and *Hawthorne*. The "ease" which is so often spoken of as its distinguishing feature, it has been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone, as a point of really difficult attainment. This idea, however, must be received with some reservation. The natural style is difficult only to those who should never intermeddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct that the *tone*, in composition, should be that which, at any given point or upon any given topic, would be the tone of the great mass of humanity. The author who, after the manner of the North Americans, is merely at *all* times *quiet*, is, of course, upon *most* occasions, merely silly or stupid, and has no more right to be thought "easy" or "natural" than has a cockney exquisite, or the sleeping beauty in the wax-works.

The "peculiarity," or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne, would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what *is* the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated, we can, *of course*, no longer wonder, when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points—at that point which, having the least concern with Nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment, and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater

number of his subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all.

In defence of allegory, (however, or for whatever object employed,) there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy—that is to say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper for the purpose, of the real with the unreal; having never more of intelligible connexion than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth —that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument—could be promptly demonstrated; the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble— but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a *very* profound undercurrent, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction—that of earnestness or verisimilitude. That "The Pilgrim's Progress" is a ludicrously over-rated book, owing its

seeming popularity to one or two of those accidents in critical literature which by the critical are sufficiently well understood, is a matter upon which no two thinking people disagree; but the pleasure derivable from it, in any sense, will be found in the direct ratio of the reader's capacity to smother its true purpose, in the direct ratio of his ability to keep the allegory out of sight, or of his *in*ability to comprehend it. Of allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and making its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant *appositeness*, the "Undine" of De La Motte Fouqué is the best, and undoubtedly a very remarkable specimen.

The obvious causes, however, which have prevented Mr. Hawthorne's *popularity*, do not suffice to condemn him in the eyes of the few who belong properly to books, and to whom books, perhaps, do not quite so properly belong. These few estimate an author, not as do the public, altogether by what he does, but in great measure—indeed, even in the greatest measure—by what he evinces a capability of doing. In this view, Hawthorne stands among literary people in America much in the same light as did Coleridge in England. The few, also, through a certain warping of the taste, which long pondering upon books as books merely never fails to induce, are not in condition to view the errors of a scholar as errors altogether. At any time these gentlemen are prone to think the public not right rather than an educated author wrong. But the simple truth is, that the writer who aims at impressing the people, is *always* wrong when he fails in forcing that people to receive the impression. How far Mr. Hawthorne has addressed the people at all, is, of course, not a question for me to decide. His books afford strong

internal evidence of having been written to himself and his particular friends alone.

There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the office of this age to overthrow—the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its merit. I do not suppose even the weakest of the Quarterly reviewers weak enough to maintain that in a book's size or mass, abstractly considered, there is anything which especially calls for our admiration. A mountain, simply through the sensation of physical magnitude which it conveys, does indeed, affect us with a sense of the sublime, but we cannot admit any such influence in the contemplation even of "The Columbiad." The Quarterlies themselves will not admit it. And yet, what else are we to understand by their continual prating about "sustained effort?" Granted that this sustained effort has accomplished an epic—let us then admire the effort, (if this be a thing admirable,) but certainly not the epic on the effort's account. Common sense, in the time to come, may possibly insist upon measuring a work of art rather by the object it fulfils, by the impression it makes, than by the time it took to fulfil the object, or by the extent of "sustained effort" which became necessary to produce the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another; nor can all the transcendentalists in Heathendom confound them.

The pieces in the volumes entitled "Twice-Told Tales," are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover, they are by no means *all* tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a

Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Foot-Prints on the Sea-Shore." I mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the Essays just named, I must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterized by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it *repose*. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and with all is a calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt—who, with vivid originality of manner and expression, have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The Essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with the Spectator, they have a vast superiority at all points. The Spectator, Mr. Irving, and Hawthorne have in common that

tranquil and subdued manner which I have chosen to denominate *repose*; but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before me the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong undercurrent of *suggestion* runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy, and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that I desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the

perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem *too* brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration of repetition or purpose—the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger has wrought brilliant things—pungent and spirit-stirring—but, like all immassive bodies, they lack *momentum*, and thus fail to satisfy the poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But

simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree,

the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—(the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added, here, *par parenthèse*, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at a great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood. The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius: although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of "The Tales of a Traveller" of Washington Irving, and these "Twice-Told Tales" of Mr. Hawthorne.

Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British Magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's Tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art —an Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent *cliques* which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these "Twice-Told Tales." As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original in *all* points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. "Wakefield" is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea—a well-known incident—is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting

his wife and residing *incognito*, for twenty years in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed. "The Wedding Knell" is full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production. "The Minister's Black Veil" is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be *caviare*. The *obvious* meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The *moral* put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the *true* import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye, (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" is vividly original and managed most dexterously. "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is exceedingly well imagined, and excuted with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it. "The White Old Maid" is objectionable, even more than the "Minister's Black Veil," on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

"The Hollow of the Three Hills" we would quote in full, had we space;—not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the

Distant and the Past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article also, the artist is conspicuous—not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word *tells*, and there is not a word which does *not* tell.

In "Howe's Masquerade" we observe something which resembles a plagiarism—but which *may* be a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question.

> *With a dark flush of wrath* upon his brow they saw the general *draw his sword* and *advance to meet* the figure *in the cloak* before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor. "*Villain, unmuffle yourself*," cried he, "you pass no farther!" The figure, without blenching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and *lowered the cape of the cloak* from his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, *and let fall his sword upon the floor*.—See vol. 2, p. 20.

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called "William Wilson," one of

the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

> The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangement at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before; and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, *advanced* with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me. Thus it appeared I say, but was not. It was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically mine own. *His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor.* Vol. 2, p. 336.

Here, it will be observed that, not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various *points* of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each, there is a quarrel —that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself," of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56, of "William Wilson."

I must hasten to conclude this paper with a summary of Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits.

He is peculiar and *not* original—unless in those detailed fancies and detached thoughts which his

want of general originality will deprive of the appreciation due to them, in preventing them from ever reaching the *public* eye. He is infinitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will not do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his nature, which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his Goodman Browns and White Old Maids into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his Wakefields and Little Annie's Rambles. Indeed, *his* spirit of "metaphor run-mad" is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humor, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity; and with these varied good qualities he has done *well* as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly as well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of "The Dial," and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of "The North American Review."

ELIZABETH FRIEZE ELLETT

MRS. ELLETT, or ELLET, has been long before the public as an author. Having contributed largely to the newspapers and other periodicals in her youth, she first made her *débût* on a more comprehensive scale, as the writer of "Teresa Contarini," a five-act tragedy, which had considerable merit, but was withdrawn after its first night of representation at the Park. This occurred at some period previous to the year 1834; the precise date I am unable to remember. The ill success of the play had little effect in repressing the ardor of the poetess, who has since furnished numerous papers to the Magazines. Her articles are, for the most part, in the *rifacimento* way, and, although no doubt composed in good faith, have the disadvantage of *looking* as if hashed up for just so much money as they will bring. The charge of wholesale plagiarism which has been adduced against Mrs. Ellett, I confess that I have not felt sufficient interest in her works, to investigate—and am therefore bound to believe it unfounded. In person, short and much inclined to *embonpoint*.

AMELIA WELBY

MRS. AMELIA WELBY has nearly all the imagination of Maria del Occidente, with a more refined taste; and nearly all the passion of Mrs. Norton, with a nicer ear, and (what is surprising) equal art. Very few American poets are at all comparable with her in the true poetic qualities. As for our *poetesses* (an absurd but necessary word), few of them approach her.

With some modifications, this little poem would do honor to any one living or dead:

The moon within our casement beams,
  Our blue-eyed babe hath dropped to sleep,
And I have left it to its dreams
  Amid the shadows deep,
To muse beside the silver tide
Whose waves are rippling at thy side.

It is a still and lovely spot
  Where they have laid thee down to rest;
The white rose and forget-me-not
  Bloom sweetly on thy breast,
And birds and streams with liquid lull
Have made the stillness beautiful.

And softly thro' the forest bars
  Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
Float ever in, like winged stars,
  Amid the purpling glooms:
Their sweet songs, borne from tree to tree,
Thrill the light leaves with melody.

Alas! the very path I trace,
In happier hours thy footsteps made;
This spot was once thy resting-place;
Within the silent shade
Thy white hand trained the fragrant bough
That drops its blossoms o'er me now.

'Twas here at eve we used to rove;
'Twas here I breathed my whispered vows,
And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
Beneath the apple-boughs.
Our hearts had melted into one,
But Death undid what Love had done.

Alas! too deep a weight of thought
Had fill'd thy heart in youth's sweet hour;
It seem'd with love and bliss o'erfraught;
As fleeting passion-flower
Unfolding 'neath a southern sky,
To blossom soon and soon to die.

Yet in these calm and blooming bowers,
I seem to see thee still,
Thy breath seems floating o'er the flowers,
Thy whisper on the hill;
The clear faint star-light and the sea
Are whispering to my heart of thee.

No more thy smiles my heart rejoice—
Yet still I start to meet thine eye,
And call upon the low sweet voice
That gives me no reply—
And list within my silent door
For the light feet that come no more.

In a critical mood I would speak of these stanzas thus:—The subject has *nothing* of originality:—A widower muses by the grave of his wife. Here then is a great demerit; for originality of theme, if not absolutely first sought, should be sought among the first. Nothing is more clear than this proposition—although denied by the chlorine critics (the

grass-green). The desire of the new is an element of the soul. The most exquisite pleasures grow dull in repetition. A strain of music enchants. Heard a second time it pleases. Heard a tenth, it does not displease. We hear it a twentieth, and ask ourselves why we admired. At the fiftieth it induces ennui—at the hundredth, disgust.

Mrs. Welby's theme is, therefore, radically faulty so far as originality is concerned;—but of common themes, it is one of the very best among the class *passionate*. True passion is prosaic—homely. Any strong mental emotion stimulates *all* the mental faculties; thus grief the imagination:—but in proportion as the effect is strengthened, the cause surceases. The excited fancy triumphs—the grief is subdued—chastened—is no longer grief. In this mood we are poetic, and it is clear that a poem now written will be poetic in the exact ratio of its dispassion. A passionate poem is a contradiction in terms. When I say, then, that Mrs. Welby's stanzas are good among the class *passionate* (using the term commonly and falsely applied), I mean that her tone is properly subdued, and is not so much the tone of passion, as of a gentle and melancholy regret, interwoven with a pleasant sense of the natural loveliness surrounding the lost in the tomb, and a memory of her human beauty while alive.—Elegiac poems should either assume this character, or dwell purely on the beauty (moral or physical) of the departed—or, better still, utter the notes of triumph. I have endeavored to carry out this latter idea in some verses which I have called "Lenore."

Those who object to the proposition—that poetry and passion are discordant—would cite Mrs. Welby's poem as an instance of a passionate one. It is precisely similar to the hundred others which have

been cited for like purpose. But it is *not* passionate; and for this reason (with others having regard to her fine genius) it *is* poetical. The critics upon this topic display an amusing *ignoratio elenchi.*

Dismissing originality and tone, I pass to the general handling, than which nothing could be more pure, more natural, or more judicious. The perfect keeping of the various points is admirable—and the result is entire unity of impression, or effect. The time, a moonlight night; the locality of the grave; the passing thither from the cottage, and the conclusion of the theme with the return to "the silent door"; the babe left, meanwhile, "to its dreams"; the "white rose and forget-me-not" upon the breast of the entombed; the "birds and streams, with liquid lull, that make the stillness beautiful"; the birds whose songs "thrill the light leaves with melody";—all these are appropriate and lovely conceptions:—only quite unoriginal;—and (be it observed), the higher order of genius should, and will combine the original with that which is *natural* —not in the vulgar sense, (ordinary)—but in the artistic sense, which has reference to the *general intention of Nature.*—We have this combination well effected in the lines:

> And softly through the forest bars
> Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
> Float ever in, like winged stars,
> Amid the purpling glooms—

which are, unquestionably, the finest in the poem.

The reflections suggested by the scene—commencing:

> Alas! the very path I trace,

are, also, something more than merely natural, and

are richly ideal; especially the cause assigned for the early death; and "the fragrant bough"

That drops its blossoms o'er me now.

The two concluding stanzas are remarkable examples of common fancies rejuvenated, and ætherealized by grace of expression, and melody of rhythm.

The "light lovely shapes" in the third stanza (however beautiful in themselves), are defective, when viewed in reference to the "birds" of the stanza preceding. The topic "birds" is dismissed in the one paragraph, to be resumed in the other.

"Drops," in the last line of the fourth stanza, is improperly used in an active sense. *To drop* is a neuter verb. An apple drops; we let the apple fall.

The repetition ("seemed," "seem," "seems,") in the sixth and seventh stanzas, is ungraceful; so also that of "heart," in the last line of the seventh, and the first of the eighth. The words "breathed" and "whispered," in the second line of the fifth stanza, have a force too nearly identical. "*Neath*," just below, is an awkward contraction. *All* contractions are awkward. It is no paradox, that the more prosaic the construction of verse, the better. *Inversions* should be dismissed. The most forcible lines are the most direct. Mrs. Welby owes three-fourths of her power (so far as style is concerned), to her freedom from these vulgar, and particularly English errors—elision and inversion. *O'er* is, however, too often used by her in place of *over*, and *'twas* for *it was*. We see instances here. The only inversions, strictly speaking, are

The moon within our casement beams,

and—"Amid the shadows deep."

The versification throughout, is unusually good. Nothing can excel

> And birds and streams with liquid lull
> Have made the stillness beautiful....
>
> And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
> Beneath the apple-boughs....

or the whole of the concluding stanza, if we leave out of view the unpleasant repetition of "*And*," at the commencement of the third and fifth lines, "*Thy white hand trained*" (see stanza the fourth) involves four consonants, that unite with difficulty —*ndtr*—and the harshness is rendered more apparent, by the employment of the spondee, "*hand trained*," in place of an iambus. "*Melody*," is a feeble termination of the third stanza's last line. The syllable *dy* is not full enough to sustain the rhyme. All these endings, liber*ty*, proper*ty*, happi*ly*, and the like, however justified by authority, are grossly objectionable. Upon the whole, there are some poets in America (Bryant and Sprague, for example), who equal Mrs. Welby in the negative merits of that limited versification which they chiefly affect —the iambic pentameter—but none equal her in the richer and positive merits of rhythmical variety, conception—invention. They, in the old routine, rarely err. She often surprises, and always delights, by novel, rich and accurate combination of the ancient musical expressions.

BAYARD TAYLOR

I BLUSH to see, in the *Literary World*, an invidious notice of BAYARD TAYLOR'S "*Rhymes of Travel.*" What makes the matter *worse*, the *critique* is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet:—and what makes the matter *worst*, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits, or in the minor morals of the Muse, with *the worst* of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone:

> It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts everything. He can do one thing as well as another; for he can really do nothing..... Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, *but, &c., &c., &c.*

The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical *ruses*—that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general *feel* to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's *distinguishing excellence*. He is, unquestionably, the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of

all our poets, young or old—in point, I mean, of *expression*. His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's *implied* sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment,") and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order:— By "rhetoric" I intend the *mode generally* in which Thought is presented. Where shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

> First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones
> Of twice three thousand years,
> Came *with the wo a grieving Goddess owns*
> *Who longs for mortal tears*,
> The dust of ruin to her mantle clung
> And dimmed her crown of gold,
> While *the majestic sorrows of her tongue*
> *From Tyre to Indus rolled.*
>
> Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of wo
> *Whose only glory streams*
> *From its lost childhood like the Arctic glow*
> *Which sunless winter dreams.*
> *In the red desert moulders Babylon*
> *And the wild serpent's hiss*
> *Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone*
> *And waste Persepolis.*
>
> Then from her seat, *amid the palms embowered*
> *That shade the Lion-land*,
> Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,
> The fetters on her hand.
> Backward she saw, from out the drear eclipse,
> The mighty Theban years,
> *And the deep anguish of her mournful lips*
> *Interpreted her tears.*

I copy these passages first, because the critic in question has copied them, without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur—for they *are* grand;

and secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of *skill* in their way. But thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing *imagination* evinced in the lines italicized. My very soul revolts at *such* efforts (as the one I refer to,) to depreciate *such* poems as Mr. Taylor's. *Is* there *no* honor—no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be *forever* sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that which assures temporary success to *them*, in common with Swaim's Panacea or Morrison's pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a Magazine paper exposing—*ruthlessly* exposing, the *dessous de cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while *genius*, (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling,) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which any one, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American Letters by an article in that magnanimous journal, "The——Review." He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (as in the case of Simms,) to vilify, and vilify *personally* any one not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, *and must have it.*

HENRY B. HIRST

MR. HENRY B. HIRST, of Philadelphia, has, undoubtedly, some merit as a poet. His sense of beauty is keen, although indiscriminative; and his versification would be unusually effective but for the spirit of hyperism, or exaggeration, which seems to be the ruling feature of the man. He is always sure to overdo a good thing; and, in especial, he insists upon rhythmical effects until they cease to have any effect at all—or until they give to his compositions an air of mere oddity. His principal *defect*, however, is a want of constructive ability;—he can never put together a story intelligibly. His chief *sin* is imitativeness. He never writes anything which does not immediately put us in mind of something that we have seen better written before. Not to do him injustice, however, I here quote two stanzas from a little poem of his, called "The Owl." The passages italicized are highly imaginative:

When twilight fades and evening falls
  Alike on tree and tower,
And Silence, like a pensive maid,
  Walks round each slumbering bower:
When fragrant flowerets fold their leaves,
  And all is still in sleep,
The horned owl *on moonlit wing*
  Flies from the donjon keep.

And he calls aloud—"too-whit! too-whoo!"
  And the nightingale is still,
And the pattering step of the hurrying hare
  Is hushed upon the hill;

And he crouches low in the dewy grass
As the *lord of the night* goes by,
Not with a loudy whirring wing
But like a lady's sigh.

No one, save a poet at heart, could have conceived these images; and they are embodied with much skill. In the "pattering step," &c., we have an admirable "echo of sound to sense," and the title, "lord of the night," applied to the owl, does Mr. Hirst infinite credit—*if* the idea be original with Mr. Hirst. Upon the whole, the poems of this author are eloquent (or perhaps elocutionary) rather than poetic—but he *has* poetical merit, beyond a doubt—merit which his enemies need not attempt to smother by any mere ridicule thrown upon the *man*.

To my face, and in the presence of my friends, Mr. H. has always made a point of praising my own poetical efforts; and, for this reason, I should forgive him, perhaps, the amiable weakness of abusing them anonymously. In a late number of "The Philadelphia Saturday Courier," he does me the honor of attributing to my pen a ballad called "Ulalume," which has been going the rounds of the press, sometimes with *my* name to it; sometimes with Mr. Willis's, and sometimes with no name at all. Mr. Hirst insists upon it that *I* wrote it, and it is just possible that he knows more about the matter than I do myself. Speaking of a particular passage, he says:

We have spoken of the mystical appearance of Astarte as a fine touch of Art. This is borrowed, and from the first canto of Hirst's Endymion—[The reader will observe that the anonymous critic has *no* personal acquaintance whatever with Mr. Hirst, but takes care to call him "Hirst" simply, just as we say "Homer."]—from Hirst's "Endy-

mion," published years since in "The Southern Literary Messenger":

> Slowly Endymion bent, the light Elysian
> Flooding his figure. Kneeling on one knee,
> He loosed his sandals, lea
> And lake and woodland glittering on his vision-
> A fairy landscape, bright and beautiful,
> With Venus at her full.

Astarte is another name for Venus; and when we remember that Diana is about to descend to Endymion—that the scene which is about to follow is one of love—that Venus is the star of love—and that Hirst, by introducing it as he does, shadows out his story exactly as Mr. Poe introduces his Astarte—the plagiarism of idea becomes evident.

Now I really feel ashamed to say that, as yet, I have not perused "Endymion"—for Mr. Hirst will retort at once—"That is no fault of mine—you *should* have read it—I gave you a copy—and, besides, you had no business to fall asleep when I did you the honor of reading it *to* you." Without a word of excuse, therefore, I will merely copy the passage in "Ulalume" which the author of "Endymion" says I purloined from the lines quoted above:

> And now, as the night was senescent
> And star-dials pointed to morn—
> As the star-dials hinted of morn—
> At the end of my path a liquescent
> And nebulous lustre was born,
> Out of which a miraculous crescent
> Arose with a duplicate horn—
> Astarte's bediamonded crescent,
> Distinct with its duplicate horn.

Now, I may be permitted to regret—really to *regret*—that I can find no resemblance between the two passages in question; for *malo cum Platone*

errare, &c., and to be a good imitator of Henry B. Hirst, is quite honor enough for *me*.

In the meantime, here is a passage from another little ballad of mine, called "Lenore," first published in 1830:

How shall the ritual, then, be read—the requiem how be sung
By you—by yours, the evil eye—by yours, the slanderous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?

And here is a passage from "*The Penance of Roland*," by Henry B. Hirst, published in "Graham's Magazine" for January, 1848:

Mine the tongue that wrought this evil—mine the false and slanderous tongue
That done to death the Lady Gwineth—Oh, my soul is sadly wrung!
"Demon! devil," groaned the warrior, "devil of *the evil eye!*"

Now my objection to all this is not that Mr. Hirst has *appropriated* my property—(I am fond of a *nice* phrase)—but that he has not done it so cleverly as I could wish. Many a lecture, on literary topics, have I given Mr. H.; and I confess that, in general, he has adopted my advice so implicitly that his poems, upon the whole, are little more than our conversations done into verse.

"Steal, dear Endymion," I used to say to him—"for very well do I know you can't help it; and the more you put in your book that is not your own, why the better your book will be:—but be cautious and steal *with an air*. In regard to myself—you need give yourself no trouble about *me*. I shall always feel honored in being of use to you; and provided you purloin my poetry *in a reputable*

manner, you are quite welcome to just as much of it as you (who are a *very* weak little man) can conveniently carry away."

So far—let me confess—Mr. Hirst has behaved remarkably well in largely availing himself of the privilege thus accorded:—but, in the case now at issue, he stands in need of some gentle rebuke. I do *not* object to his stealing my verses; but I *do* object to his stealing them in bad grammar. My quarrel with him is *not*, in short, that he *did* this thing, but that he ***has went and done did it.***

ROBERT WALSH

HAVING read Mr. Walsh's "Didactics," with much attention and pleasure, I am prepared to admit that he is one of the finest writers, one of the most accomplished scholars, and when not in too great a hurry, one of the most accurate thinkers in the country. Yet had I never seen this work I should never have entertained these opinions. Mr. Walsh has been peculiarly an anonymous writer, and has thus been instrumental in cheating himself of a great portion of that literary renown which is most unequivocally his due. I have been not unfrequently astonished in the perusal of this book, at meeting with a variety of well known and highly esteemed acquaintances, for whose paternity I had been accustomed to give credit where I now find it should not have been given. Among these I may mention in especial the very excellent Essay on the acting of Kean, entitled "*Notices of Kean's principal performances during his first season in Philadelphia,*" to be found at page 146, volume I. I have often thought of the unknown author of this Essay, as of one to whom I might speak, if occasion should at any time be granted me, with a perfect certainty of being understood. I have looked to the article itself as to a fair oasis in the general blankness and futility of our customary theatrical notices. I read it with that thrill of pleasure with which I always welcome my own long-cherished opinions, when I meet them unexpectedly in the language of another. How absolute is the necessity now daily growing, of rescuing our stage criticism from the control of illiterate

mountebanks, and placing it in the hands of gentlemen and scholars!

The paper on *Collegiate Education*, is much more than a sufficient reply to that Essay in the *Old Bachelor* of Mr. Wirt, in which the attempt is made to argue down colleges as seminaries for the young. Mr. Walsh's article does not uphold Mr. Barlow's plan of a National University—a plan which is assailed by the Attorney General—but comments upon some errors in point of fact, and enters into a brief but comprehensive examination of the general subject. He maintains with undeniable truth, that it is illogical to deduce arguments against universities which are to exist at the present day, from the inconveniences found to be connected with institutions formed in the dark ages—institutions similar to our own in but few respects, modelled upon the principles and prejudices of the times, organized with a view to particular ecclesiastical purposes, and confined in their operations by an infinity of Gothic and perplexing regulations. He thinks, (and I believe he thinks with a great majority of our well educated fellow citizens,) that in the case either of a great national institute or of State universities, nearly all the difficulties so much insisted upon will prove a series of mere chimeras—that the evils apprehended might be readily obviated, and the acknowledged benefits uninterruptedly secured. He denies, very justly, the assertion of the *Old Bachelor*—that, in the progress of society, funds for collegiate establishments will no doubt be accumulated, independently of government, when their benefits are evident, and a necessity for them felt—and that the rich who have funds will, whenever strongly impressed with the necessity of so doing, provide, either by associations or other-

wise, proper seminaries for the education of their children. He shows that these assertions are contradictory to experience, and more particularly to the experience of the State of Virginia, where, notwithstanding the extent of private opulence, and the disadvantages under which the community so long labored from a want of regular and systematic instruction, it was the government which was finally compelled, and not private societies which were induced, to provide establishments for effecting the great end. He says, (and therein we must all fully agree with him,) that Virginia may consider herself fortunate in following the example of all the enlightened nations of modern times rather than in hearkening to the counsels of the Old Bachelor. He dissents, (and who would not?) from the allegation, that "the most eminent men in Europe, particularly in England, have received their education neither at public schools or universities," and shows that the very reverse may be affirmed—that on the continent of Europe by far the greater number of its great names have been attached to the rolls of its universities—and that in England a vast majority of those minds which we have reverenced so long—the Bacons, the Newtons, the Barrows, the Clarkes, the Spencers, the Miltons, the Drydens, the Addisons, the Temples, the Hales, the Clarendons, the Mansfields, Chatham, Pit, Fox, Wyndham, &c., were educated among the venerable cloisters of Oxford or of Cambridge. He cites the Oxford Prize Essays, so well known even in America, as direct evidence of the energetic ardor in acquiring knowledge brought about through the means of British Universities, and maintains that "when attention is given to the subsequent public stations and labors of most of the writers of these Essays,

it will be found that they prove also the ultimate practical utility of the literary discipline of the colleges for the students and the nation." He argues, that were it even true that the greatest men have not been educated in public schools, the fact would have little to do with the question of their efficacy in the instruction of the mass of mankind. Great men cannot be *created*—and are usually independent of all particular schemes of education. Public seminaries are best adapted to the generality of cases. He concludes with observing that the course of study pursued at English Universities, is more liberal by far than we are willing to suppose it—that it is, demonstrably, the best, inasmuch as regards the preference given to classical and mathematical knowledge—and that upon the whole it would be an easy matter, in transferring to America the general principles of those institutions, to leave them their obvious errors, while we avail ourselves as we best may, of their still more obvious virtues and advantages.

The only paper in the *Didactics*, to which I have any decided objection, is a tolerably long article on the subject of *Phrenology*, entitled "Memorial of the Phrenological Society of —— to the Honorable the Congress of —— sitting at ——." Considered as a specimen of mere burlesque, the *Memorial* is well enough—but I am sorry to see the energies of a scholar and an editor (who should be, if he be not, a man of metaphysical science,) so wickedly employed as in any attempt to throw ridicule upon a question, (however much maligned, or however apparently ridiculous,) whose merits he has never examined, and of whose very nature, history, and assumptions, he is most evidently ignorant. Mr. Walsh is either ashamed of this article now, or he will have plentiful reason to be ashamed of it hereafter.

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SEBA SMITH

WHAT few notices we have seen of this poem,* speak of it as the production of *Mrs.* Seba Smith. To be sure, gentlemen may be behind the scenes, and know more about the matter than we do. They may have some private reason for understanding that black is white—some reason into which we, personally, are not initiated. But, to ordinary perception, "Powhatan" is the composition of Seba Smith, *Esquire*, of Jack Downing memory, and *not* of his wife. *Seba Smith* is the name upon the title-page; and the personal pronoun which supplies the place of this well-known prænomen and cognomen in the preface, is, we are constrained to say, of the masculine gender. "The author of Powhatan," —thus, for example, runs a portion of the prolegomena—"does not presume to claim for *his* production the merit of good and genuine poetry, nor does *he* pretend to assign it a place in the classes or forms into which poetry is divided" in all which, by the way, he is decidedly right. But can it be that no gentleman has *read* even so far as the Preface of the book? Can it be that the critics have had no curiosity to creep into the *adyta*—into the inner mysteries of this temple? If so, they are decidedly right too.

"Powhatan" is handsomely bound. Its printing is clear beyond comparison. Its paper is magnifi-

**Powhatan; a Metrical Romance, in Seven Cantos. By* SEBA SMITH. *New York: Harper and Brothers.*

cent, and we undertake to say (for *we have* read it through with the greatest attention) that there is not a single typographical error in it, from one end to the other. Further than this, in the way of commendation, no man with both brains and conscience should proceed. In truth a more absurdly *flat* affair—for flat is the only epithet which applies in this case—was never before paraded to the world, with so grotesque an air of bombast and assumption.

To give some idea of the *tout ensemble* of the book —we have first a Dedication to the "Young People of the United States," in which Mr. Jack Downing lives, in "the hope that he may do some good in his day and generation, by adding something to the sources of rational enjoyment and *mental culture*." Next, we have a Preface, occupying four pages, in which, quoting his publishers, the author tells us that poetry is a "very great bore, and won't sell"—a thing which cannot be denied in certain cases, but which Mr. Downing denies in his own. "It may be true," he says, "of endless masses of words, that are poured forth from the press, under the name of poetry"—but it is not true "of *genuine* poetry—of that which is worthy of the name"—in short, we presume he means to say it is not in the least little bit true of "Powhatan"; with regard to whose merits he wishes to be tried, not by the critics (we fear, in fact, that here it is the critics who will be tried,) but by the *common* taste of *common* readers"—all which ideas are common enough, to say no more.

We have next, a "Sketch of the Character of Powhatan," which is exceedingly interesting and commendable, and which is taken from Burk's "History of Virginia":—four pages more. Then

comes a *Proem*—four pages more—forty-eight lines —twelve lines to a page—in which all that we can understand, is something about the name of "Powhatan"

> Descending to a distant age,
> Embodied forth on the deathless page

of the author—that is to say, of Jack Downing, Esquire. We have now one after the other, CANTOS one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven—each subdivided into PARTS, by means of Roman numerals —some of these PARTS comprehending as many as six lines—upon the principle, we presume, of packing up precious commodities in small bundles. The volume then winds up with *Notes*, in proportion of three to one, as regards the amount of text, and taken, the most of them, from Burk's Virginia, as before.

It is very difficult to keep one's countenance when reviewing such a *work* as this; but we will do our best, for the truth's sake, and put on as serious a face as the case will admit.

The leading fault of "Powhatan," then, is precisely what its author supposes to be its principal merit. "It would be difficult," he says, in that pitiable preface, in which he has so exposed himself, "to find a poem that embodies more truly the spirit of history, or indeed that follows out more faithfully many of its details." It would, indeed; and we are very sorry to say it. The truth is, Mr. Downing has never dreamed of any artistic *arrangement* of his facts. He has gone straight forward, like a blind horse, and turned neither to the one side nor to the other, for fear of stumbling. But he gets them all in—every one of them—the facts we

mean. Powhatan never did anything in his life, we are sure, that Mr. Downing has not got in his poem. He begins at the beginning, and goes on steadily to the end—painting away at his story, just as a sign-painter at a sign; beginning at the left hand side of his board, and plastering through to the right. But he has omitted one very ingenious trick of the sign-painter. He has forgotten to write under his portrait—"*this is a pig*," and thus there is some danger of mistaking it for an opossum.

But we are growing scurrilous, in spite of our promise, and must put on a sober visage once more. It *is* a hard thing, however, when we have to read and write about such doggerel as this:

But bravely to the river's brink
I led my warrior train,
And face to face, each glance they sent,
We sent it back again.
Their werowance looked stern at me,
And I looked stern at him,
And all my warriors clasped their bows,
And nerved each heart and limb.
I raised my heavy war-club high,
And swung it fiercely round,
And shook it towards the shallop's side,
Then laid it on the ground.
And then the lighted calumet
I offered to their view,
And thrice I drew the sacred smoke,
And toward the shallop blew,
And as the curling vapor rose,
Soft as a spirit prayer,
I saw the pale-face leader wave
A white flag in the air.
Then launching out their painted skiff
They boldly came to land,
And spoke us many a kindly word,
And took us by the hand.

Presenting rich and shining gifts,
Of copper, brass, and beads,
To show that they were men like us,
And prone to generous deeds.
We held a long and friendly talk,
Inquiring whence they came,
And who the leader of their band
And what their country's name.
And how their mighty shallop moved
Across the boundless sea,
And why they touched our great king's land
Without his liber*ty*.

It won't do. We cannot sing to this tune any longer. We greatly prefer,

John Gilpin was a gentleman
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

Or—

Old Grimes is dead, that good old man,
We ne'er shall see him more,
He used to wear an over-coat
All buttoned down before—

or lines to that effect—we wish we could remember the words. The part, however, about

Their werowance look'd stern at me,
And I looked stern at him—

is not quite *original* with Mr. Downing—is it? We merely ask for information. Have we not heard something about

An old crow sitting on a hickory limb,
Who winked at me, and I winked at him.

The simple truth is, that Mr. Downing never committed a greater mistake in his life than when he fancied himself a poet, even in the ninety-ninth degree. We doubt whether he could distinctly state the difference between an epic and an epigram. And it will not do for him to appeal from the critic to *common* readers—because we assure him his book is a very *un*common book. We never saw any one so uncommonly bad—nor one about whose parturition so uncommon a fuss has been made, so little to the satisfaction of common sense. Your poem is a curiosity, Mr. Jack Downing; your "Metrical Romance" is not worth a single half sheet of the paste-board upon which it is printed This is our humble and honest opinion; and, although honest opinions are not very plentiful just now you can have ours at what it is worth. But we wish, before parting, to ask you one question. What *do* you mean by that motto from Sir Philip Sidney, upon the title-page? "He cometh to you with a tale that holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner." What do you mean by it, we say. Either you cannot intend to apply it to the "*tale*" of Powhatan, or else all the "old men" in your particular neighborhood must be *very* old men; and all the "little children" a set of dunder-headed little ignoramuses.

MARGARET MILLER AND LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON

THE name of Lucretia Davidson is familiar to all readers of poetry. Dying at the early age of seventeen, she has been rendered famous not less, and certainly not more, by her own precocious genius than by three memorable biographies—one by President Morse, of the American Society of Arts, another by Miss Sedgwick, and a third by Robert Southey. Mr. Irving had formed an acquaintance with some of her relatives, and thus, while in Europe, took great interest in all that was said or written of his young countrywoman. Upon his return to America, he called upon Mrs. Davidson, and then, in 1833, first saw the subject of the memoir now before us,*—a fairy-like child of eleven. Three years afterwards he met with her again, and then found her in delicate health. Three years having again elapsed, the MSS. which form the basis of the present volume, were placed in his hands by Mrs. Davidson, as all that remained of her daughter.

Few books have interested us more profoundly. Yet the interest does not appertain solely to Margaret. "In fact the narrative," says Mr. Irving, "will be found almost as illustrative of the character of the mother as of the child; they were singularly identified in taste, feeling and pursuits; tenderly entwined together by maternal and filial affection,

* Biography and Poetical Remains of the late Margaret Miller Davidson. By Washington Irving. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard.

they reflected an inexpressibly touching grace and interest upon each other by this holy relationship, and, to my mind it would be marring one of the most beautiful and affecting groups in modern literature, to sunder them." In these words the biographer conveys no more than a just idea of the exquisite loveliness of the picture here presented to view.

The MSS. handed Mr. Irving, have been suffered, in a great measure, to tell their own thrilling tale. There has been no injudicious attempt at mere authorship. The compiler has confined himself to chronological arrangement of his memoranda, and to such simple and natural comments as serve to bind rather than to illustrate where no illustration was needed—These memoranda consist of relations by Mrs. Davidson of the infantine peculiarities of her daughter, and of her habits and general thoughts in more matured life, intermingled with letters from the young poetess to intimate friends. There is also a letter from the bereaved mother to Miss Sedgwick, detailing the last moments of the child—a letter so full of all potent nature, so full of minute beauty, and truth and pathos, that to read it without tears would be to prove one's self less than human.

The "Poetical Remains" of this young creature, who perished (of consumption) in her sixteenth year, occupy about two hundred pages of a somewhat closely printed octavo. The longest poem is called "Lenore," and consists of some two thousand lines, varying in metre from the ordinary octosyllabic, to the four-footed, or twelve-syllabled iambic. The story, which is a romantic love-tale, not ill-conceived in its incidents, is told with a skill which might put more practised bards to the blush,

and with occasional bursts of the truest poetic fire. But although as indicative of her future power, it is the most important, as it is the longest of her productions, yet, as a whole, it is not equal to some of her shorter compositions. It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, and (as we glean from the biography) after patient reflection, with much care, and with a high resolve to do something for fame. As the work of so mere a child, it is unquestionably wonderful. Its *length*, viewed in connexion with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and completeness, will impress the metaphysician most forcibly, when surveying the capacities of its author. Powers are here brought into play which are the last to be matured. For fancy we might have looked, and for the lower evidences of skill in a perfect versification and the like, but hardly for what we see in Lenore.

Yet remarkable as this production is, from the pen of a girl of fifteen, it is by no means so incomprehensible as are some of the shorter pieces. We have known instances—rarely, to be sure—but still we have known instances when finer poems in every respect than Lenore have been written by children of as immature age—but we look around us in vain for anything composed at eight years, which can bear comparison with the lines subjoined:

TO MAMMA.

Farewell, dear mother, for a while
I must resign my plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of wo,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

May the almighty Father spread
His sheltering wings above thy head.
It is not long that we must part,
Then cheer thy downcast drooping heart.

Remember, oh! remember me,
Unceasing is my love for thee!
When death shall sever earthly ties,
When thy loved form all senseless lies,

Oh! that my form with thine could flee,
And roam through wide eternity;
Could tread with thee the courts of heaven,
And count the brilliant stars of even.

Nor are these stanzas, written at ten, in any degree less remarkable—

MY NATIVE LAKE.

Thy verdan banks, thy lucid stream,
Lit by the sun's resplendent beam,
Reflect each bending tree so light
Upon thy bounding bosom bright.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

The little isles that deck thy breast,
And calmly on thy bosom rest,
How often, in my childish glee,
I've sported round them, bright and free!
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

How oft I've watch'd the fresh'ning shower
Bending the summer tree and flower,
And felt my little heart beat high
As the bright rainbow graced the sky.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

And shall I never see thee more,
My native lake, my much-loved shore
And must I bid a long adieu,
My dear, my infant home, to you?
Shall I not see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain?

In the way of criticism upon these extraordinary compositions, Mr. Irving has attempted little, and, in general, he seems more affected by the loveliness and the purity of the child than even by the genius she has evinced—however highly he may have estimated this latter. In respect, however, to a poem entitled "My Sister Lucretia,"—he thus speaks—"We have said that the example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her, and no better proof can be given of it than in the following lines, which breathe the heavenly aspirations of her pure young spirit, *in strains to us quite unearthly. We may have read poetry more artificially perfect in its structure, but never any more truly divine in its inspiration.*" The nature of inspiration is disputable —and we will not pretend to assert that Mr. Irving is in the wrong. His words, however, in their hyperbole, do wrong to his subject, and would be hyperbole still, if applied to the most exalted poets of all time.

The analogies of Nature are universal; and just as the most rapidly growing herbage is the most speedy in its decay—just as the ephemera struggles to perfection in a day only to perish in that day's decline—so the mind is early matured only to be early in its decadence; and when we behold in the eye of infancy the soul of the adult, it is but indulging in a day dream to hope for any farther proportionate development. Should the prodigy survive to ripe age, a mental imbecility, not far removed from idiocy itself, is too frequently the result. From this rule the exceptions are rare indeed; but it should be observed that, when the exception does occur, the intellect is of a Titan cast even to the days of its extreme senility, and acquires renown not in one, but in all the wide fields of fancy and of reason.

Lucretia Maria Davidson,* the elder of the two sweet sisters who have acquired so much of fame prematurely, had not, like Margaret, an object of poetical emulation in her own family. In her genius, be it what it may, there is more of self-dependence—less of the imitative. Her mother's generous romance of soul may have stimulated, but did not instruct. Thus, although she has actually given less *evidence* of power (in our opinion) than Margaret—less written proof—still its *indication* must be considered at higher value. Both perished at sixteen. Margaret, we think, has left the better poems—certainly, the more precocious—while Lucretia evinces more unequivocally the soul of the poet. We have quoted in full some stanzas composed by the former at eight years of age. The latter's earliest effusions are dated at fourteen. Yet the first compositions of the two seem to us of nearly equal merit.

The most elaborate production of Margaret is "Lenore." It was written not long before death, at the age of fifteen, after patient reflection, with much care, and with all that high resolve to do something for fame with which the reputation of her sister had inspired her. Under such circumstances, and with the early poetical education which she could not have failed to receive, we confess that, granting her a trifle more than average talent, it would have been rather a matter for surprise had she produced a worse, than had she produced a better poem than "Lenore." Its *length*, viewed in connexion with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and its completeness (and all these are points having

* Poetical Remains of the late Maria Davidson, Collected and Arranged by her Mother; with a Biography by Miss Sedgwick. Lea & Blanchard: Philadelphia.

reference to artistical *knowledge* and perseverance) will impress the critic more favorably than its fancy, or any other indication of poetic power. In all the more important qualities we have seen far—very far finer poems than "Lenore" written at a much earlier age than fifteen.

"Amir Khan," the longest and chief composition of Lucretia, has been long known to the reading public. Partly through Professor Morse, yet no doubt partly through their own merits, the poems found their way to Southey, who, after his peculiar fashion, and not unmindful of his previous *furores* in the case of Kirke White, Chatterton, and others of precocious ability, or at least celebrity, thought proper to *review* them in the Quarterly. This was at a period when we humbled ourselves, with a subserviency which would have been disgusting had it not been ludicrous, before the crudest critical *dicta* of Great Britain. It pleased the laureate, after some squibbing in the way of demurrer, to speak of the book in question as follows:—"In these poems there is enough of originality, enough of aspiration, enough of conscious energy, enough of growing power to warrant any expectations, however sanguine, which the patrons and the friends and parents of the deceased could have formed." Meaning nothing, or rather meaning anything, as we choose to interpret it, this sentence was still sufficient (and in fact the half of it would have been more than sufficient) to establish upon an immovable basis the reputation of Miss Davidson in America. Thenceforward any examination of her true claims to distinction was considered little less than a declaration of heresy. Nor does the awe of the laureate's *ipse dixit* seem even yet to have entirely subsided "The genius of Lucretia

Davidson," says Miss Sedgwick, "has had the meed of far more authoritative praise than ours; the following tribute is from the London Quarterly Review." What this lady—for whom and for whose opinion we still have the highest respect—can mean by calling the praise of Southey "more authoritative" than her own, is a point we shall not pause to determine. *Her* praise is at least honest, or we hope so. Its "authority" is in exact proportion with each one's estimate of her judgment. But it would not do to say all this of the author of "Thalaba." It would not do to say it in the hearing of men who are sane, and who, being sane, have perused the leading articles in the "London Quarterly Review" during the ten or fifteen years prior to that period when Robert Southey, having concocted "The Doctor," took definite leave of his wits. In fact, for anything that we have yet seen or heard to the contrary, the opinion of the laureate, in respect to the poem of "Amir Khan," is a matter still only known to Robert Southey. But were it known to all the world, as Miss Sedgwick supposes with so charmingly innocent an air; we mean to say were it really an honest opinion,—this "authoritative praise,"—still it would be worth, in the eyes of every sensible person, only just so much as it demonstrates, or makes a show of demonstrating. Happily the day has gone by, and we trust forever, when men are content to swear blindly by the words of a master, poet-laureate though he be. But what Southey says of the poem is at best an opinion and no more. What Miss Sedgwick says of it is very much in the same predicament. "Amir Khan," she writes, "has long been before the public, but we think it has suffered from a general and very natural distrust of precocious genius. The versifica-

tion is graceful, the story beautifully developed, and the orientalism well sustained. *We think it would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame; as the production of a girl of fifteen it seems prodigious.*" The cant of a kind heart when betraying into error a naturally sound judgment, is perhaps the only species of cant in the world not altogether contemptible.

We yield to no one in warmth of admiration for the personal character of these sweet sisters, as that character is depicted by the mother, by Miss Sedgwick, and by Mr. Irving. But it costs us no effort to distinguish that which, in our heart, is love of their worth, from that which, in our intellect, is appreciation of their poetic ability. With the former, as critic, we have nothing to do. The distinction is one too obvious for comment; and its observation would have spared us much twaddle on the part of the commentators upon "Amir Khan."

We will endeavor to convey, as concisely as possible, some idea of this poem as it exists, not in the fancy of the enthusiastic, but in fact. It includes four hundred and forty lines. The metre is chiefly octo-syllabic. At one point it is varied by a casual introduction of an anapæst in the first and second foot; at another (in a song) by seven stanzas of four lines each, rhyming alternately; the metre anapæstic of four feet alternating with three. The versification is always good, so far as the meagre written rules of our English prosody extend; that is to say, there is seldom a syllable too much or too little; but long and short syllables are placed at random, and a crowd of consonants sometimes renders a line unpronounceable. For example:

> He loved,—and oh, he loved so well
> *That sorrow scarce dared break the spell.*

At times, again, the rhythm lapses, in the most inartistical manner, and evidently without design, from one species to another altogether incongruous; as, for example, in the sixth line of these eight, where the tripping anapæstic stumbles into the demure iambic, recovering itself, even more awkwardly, in the conclusion:

> Bright Star of the Morning! this bosom is cold—
> I was forced from my native shade,
> And I wrapped me around with my mantle's fold,
> A sad, mournful Circassian maid!
> And I then vow'd that rapture should never move
> *This changeless cheek, this rayless eye,*
> And I then vowed to feel neither bliss nor love,
> *But I vowed I would meet thee and die.*

Occasionally the versification rises into melody and even strength; as here—

> 'Twas at the hour when Peris love
> To gaze upon the Heaven above
> Whose portals bright with many a gem
> Are closed—forever closed *on them.*

Upon the whole, however, it is feeble, vacillating, and ineffective; giving token of having been "touched up" by the hand of a friend, from a much worse, into its present condition. Such rhymes as floor and shower—ceased and breast—shade and spread—brow and wo—clear and far—clear and air—morning and dawning—forth and earth—step and deep—Khan and hand—are constantly occurring; and although, certainly, we should not, *as a general rule*, expect better things from a girl of sixteen, we still look in vain, and with something very much akin to a smile, for ought even approaching that "*marvellous ease and grace of versification*" about which Miss Sedgwick, in the benevolence of her heart, discourses.

Nor does the story, to our dispassionate apprehension, appear "beautifully developed." It runs thus:—Amir Khan, Subahdar of Cachemere, weds a Circassian slave who, cold as a statue and as obstinately silent, refuses to return his love. The Subahdar applies to a magician, who gives him

> a pensive flower
> Gathered at midnight's magic hour;

the effect of whose perfume renders him apparently lifeless while still in possession of all his senses. Amreeta, the slave, supposing her lover dead, gives way to clamorous grief, and reveals the secret love which she has long borne her lord, but refused to divulge because a slave. Amir Khan hereupon revives, and all trouble is at an end.

Of course, no one at all read in Eastern fables will be willing to give Miss Davidson credit for *originality* in the conception of this little story; and if she have claim to merit at all, as regards it, that claim must be founded upon the manner of narration. But it will be at once evident that the most naked outline alone can be given in the compass of four hundred and forty lines. The tale is, in sober fact, told very much as any young person might be expected to tell it. The strength of the narrator is wholly laid out upon a description of moonlight (in the usual style) with which the poem commences—upon a second description of moonlight (in precisely the same manner) with which a second division commences—and in a third description of the hall in which the entranced Subahdar reposes. This is all—absolutely all; or at least the rest has the nakedness of mere catalogue. We recognise, throughout, the poetic sentiment, but little—very little—of

poetic *power*. We see occasional gleams of imagination: for example—

> And every crystal cloud of Heaven
> Bowed as it passed the queen of even.....
>
> Amreeta was cold as the marble floor
> That glistens beneath the nightly shower.....
>
> At that calm hour when Peris love
> To gaze upon the Heaven above,
> Whose portals bright with many a gem
> Are closed—forever closed *on them*.....
>
> The Subahdar with noiseless step
> Rushed like the night-breeze o'er the deep.

We look in vain for another instance worth quoting. But were the fancy seen in these examples observable either in the general conduct or in the incidents of the narrative, we should not feel obliged to disagree so unequivocally with that opinion which pronounces this clever little production "*one which would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame!*"

"As the work of a girl of sixteen," most assuredly we *do not* think it "*prodigious*." In regard to it we may repeat what we said of "Lenore,"—that we have seen finer poems in every respect, written by children of more immature age. It is a creditable composition; nothing beyond this. And, in so saying, we shall startle none but the brainless, and the adopters of ready-made ideas. We are convinced that we express the unuttered sentiment of every educated individual who has read the poem. Nor, having given the plain facts of the case, do we feel called upon to proffer any apology for our flat refusal to play ditto either to Miss Sedgwick, to Mr. Irving, or to Mr. Southey.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

IN speaking of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has just published a very neat little volume of poems, we feel the necessity of employing the indefinite rather than the definite article. He is *a*, and by no means *the*, William Ellery Channing. He is only *the son* of the great essayist deceased. He is just such a person, in despite of his *clarum et venerabile nomen*, as Pindar would have designated by the significant term τις. It may be said in his favor that nobody ever heard of him. Like an honest woman, he has always succeeded in keeping himself from being made the subject of gossip. His book contains about sixty-three things, which he calls poems, and which he no doubt seriously supposes so to be. They are full of all kinds of mistakes, of which the most important is that of their having been printed at all. They are not precisely English—nor will we insult a great nation by calling them Kickapoo; perhaps they are Channingese. We may convey some general idea of them by two foreign terms not in common use—the Italian *pavoneggiarsi*, "to strut like a peacock," and the German word for "sky-rocketing," *schwarmerei*. They are more preposterous, in a word, than any poems except those of the author of "Sam Patch"; for we presume we are right (are we not?) in taking it for granted that the author of "Sam Patch" is the very worst of all the wretched poets that ever existed upon earth.

In spite, however, of the customary phrase about

a man's "making a fool of himself," we doubt if any one was ever a fool of his own free will and accord. A poet, therefore, should not always be taken too strictly to task. He should be treated with leniency, and, even when damned, should be damned with respect. Nobility of descent, too, should be allowed its privileges not more in social life than in letters. The son of a great author cannot be handled too tenderly by the critical Jack Ketch. Mr. Channing must be hung, that's true. He must be hung *in terrorem*—and for this there is no help under the sun; but then we shall do him all manner of justice, and observe every species of decorum, and be especially careful of his feelings, and hang him gingerly and gracefully, with a silken cord, as the Spaniards hang their grandees of the blue blood, their nobles of the *sangre azula*.

To be serious, then; as we always wish to be if possible. Mr. Channing (whom we suppose to be a *very* young man, since we are precluded from supposing him a *very* old one,) appears to have been inoculated, at the same moment, with *virus* from Tennyson and from Carlyle. And here we do not wish to be misunderstood. For Tennyson, as for a man imbued with the richest and rarest poetic impulses, we have an admiration—a reverence unbounded. His "Morte D'Arthur," his "Locksley Hall," his "Sleeping Beauty," his "Lady of Shalott," his "Lotos Eaters," his "Ænone," and many other poems, are not surpassed, in all that gives to Poetry its distinctive value, by the compositions of any one living or dead. And his leading error—that error which renders him unpopular—a point, to be sure, of no particular importance—that very error, we say, is founded in truth—in a keen perception of the elements of poetic beauty. We allude

to his quaintness—to what the world chooses to term his affectation. No true poet—no critic whose approbation is worth even a copy of the volume we now hold in our hand—will deny that he feels impressed, sometimes even to tears, by many of those very affectations which he is impelled by the prejudice of his education, or by the cant of his reason, to condemn. He should thus be led to examine the extent of the one, and to be wary of the deductions of the other. In fact, the profound intuition of Lord Bacon has supplied, in one of his immortal apothegms, the whole philosophy of the point at issue. "There is no exquisite beauty," he truly says, "without some *strangeness* in its proportions." We maintain, then, that Tennyson errs, not in his occasional quaintness, but in its continual and obtrusive excess. And, in accusing Mr. Channing of having been inoculated with *virus* from Tennyson, we merely mean to say that he has adopted and exaggerated that noble poet's characteristic defect, having mistaken it for his principal merit.

Mr. Tennyson is quaint only; he is never, as some have supposed him, obscure—except, indeed, to the uneducated, whom he does not address. Mr. Carlyle, on the other hand, is obscure only; he is seldom, as some have imagined him, quaint. So far he is right; for although quaintness, employed by a man of judgment and genius, may be made auxiliary to a *poem*, whose true thesis is beauty, and beauty alone, it is grossly, and even ridiculously, out of place in a work of prose. But in his obscurity it is scarcely necessary to say that he is wrong. Either a man intends to be understood, or he does not. If he write a book which he intends *not* to be understood, we shall be very happy indeed not to

understand it; but if he write a book which he means to be understood, and, in this book, be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass—and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr. Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.

It seems that having deduced, from Tennyson and Carlyle, an opinion of the sublimity of everything odd, and of the profundity of everything meaningless, Mr. Channing has conceived the idea of setting up for himself as a poet of *unusual* depth, and *very* remarkable powers of mind. His airs and graces, in consequence, have a highly picturesque effect, and the Boston critics, who have a notion that poets are porpoises, (for they are always talking about their running in "schools,") cannot make up their minds as to what particular school he must belong. *We* say the Bobby Button school, by all means. He clearly belongs to that. And should nobody ever have heard of the Bobby Button school, that is a point of no material importance. We will answer for it, as it is one of our own. Bobby Button is a gentleman with whom, for a long time, we have had the honor of an intimate acquaintance. His personal appearance is striking. He has quite a big head. His eyes protrude and have all the air of saucers. His chin retreats. His mouth is depressed at the corners. He wears a perpetual frown of contemplation. His words are slow, emphatic, few, and oracular. His "thes," "ands," and "buts," have more meaning than other men's polysyllables. His nods would have put Burleigh's to the blush. His whole aspect, indeed, conveys the idea of a gentleman modest to a fault, and painfully overburthened with intellect. We insist, however, upon calling Mr. Channing's school of

poetry the Bobby Button school, rather because Mr. Channing's poetry is strongly suggestive of Bobby Button, than because Mr. Button himself ever dallied, to any very great extent, with the Muses. With the exception, indeed, of a *very* fine "Sonnet to a Pig"—or rather the fragment of a sonnet, for he proceeded no farther than the words "*O* piggy wiggy," with the *O* italicized for emphasis—with the exception of this, we say, we are not aware of his having produced anything worthy of that stupendous genius which is certainly *in* him, and only wants, like the starling of Sterne, "to get out."

The best passage in the book before us, is to be found at page 121, and we quote it, as a matter of simple justice, in full:

> Dear friend, in this fair atmosphere again,
> Far from the noisy echoes of the main,
> Amid the world-old mountains, and the hills
> From whose strange grouping a fine power distills
> The soothing and the calm, I seek repose,
> The city's noise forgot and hard stern woes.
> As thou once said'st, the rarest sons of earth
> Have in the dust of cities shown their worth,
> Where long collision with the human curse
> Has of great glory been the frequent nurse,
> *And only those who in sad cities dwell*
> *Are of the green trees fully sensible.*
> *To them the silver bells of tinkling streams*
> *Seem brighter than an angel's laugh in dreams.*

The four lines italicized are highly meritorious, and the whole extract is so far decent and intelligible, that we experienced a feeling of surprise upon meeting it amid the doggerel which surrounds it. Not less was our astonishment upon finding, at page 18, a fine thought so well embodied as the following:

> *Or see the early stars, a mild sweet train.*
> *Come out to bury the diurnal sun.*

But, in the way of commendation, we have now done. We have carefully explored the whole volume in vain, for a single additional line worth even the most qualified applause.

The utter *abandon*—the charming *negligé*—the perfect looseness (to use a western phrase) of his rhythm, is one of Mr. C.'s most noticeable, and certainly one of his most refreshing traits. It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this, at page 3, for example:

Masculine almost though softly carv'd in grace,

where "masculine" has to be read as a trochee, and "almost" as an iambus; or this, at page 8:

That compels me on through wood, and fell, and moor,

where "that compels" has to be pronounced as equivalent to the iambus "me on"; or this, at page 18:

I leave thee, *the* maid spoke to *the* true youth,

where both the "*thes*" demand a strong accent to preserve the iambic rhythm; or this, at page 29:

So in our steps strides truth and honest trust,

where (to say nothing of the grammar, which *may* be Dutch, but is not English) it is quite impossible to get through with the "step strides truth" without dislocating the under jaw; or this, at page 32:

The *se*rene azure *the* keen stars are now;

or this, on the same page:

Some*times* of sorrow, joy, to *thy* Fu*ture;*

or this, at page 56:

Harsh action, even in repose inwardly harsh;

or this, at page 59:

Provides am*plest* enjoyment. O my brother;

or this, at page 138:

Like the swift petrel, mimicking the wave's measure

about all of which the less we say the better.

At page 96, we read thus:

Where the untrammelled soul on her wind pinions,
Fearlessly sweeping, defies my earthly foes,
There, there upon that infinitest sea
Lady thy hope, so fair a hope, summons me.

At page 51, we have it thus:

The river calmly flows
Through shining banks, thro' lonely glen
Where the owl shrieks, tho' ne'er the cheer of men
Has stirred its mute repose;
Still if you should walk there you would go there again.

At page 136, we read as follows:

Tune thy clear voice to no funereal song,
For O Death stands to welcome thee sure.

At page 116, he has this:

———These graves, you mean;
Their histo*ry* who knows bet*ter* than I?
For in the busy street strikes on my ear
Each sound, even inaudible voices
Lengthen the long tale my memory tells.

Just below, on the same page, he has

I see but little difference tru*ly;*

and at page 76 he fairly puts the climax to metrical absurdity in the lines which follow:

The spirit builds his house in *the* last flowers—
A beautiful mansion; how the colors live.
Int*ri*cately del*i*cate!

This is to be read, of course, intrikkittly delikkit, and "intrikkittly delikkit" it is —unless, indeed, we are very especially mistaken.

The affectations—the Tennysonisms of Mr. Channing—pervade his book at all points, and are not easily particularized. He employs, for example, the word "delight" for "delighted"; as at page 2:

> Delight to trace the mountain-brook's descent.

He uses, also, all the prepositions in a different sense from the rabble. If, for instance, he was called upon to say "on," he wouldn't say it by any means, but he'd say "off," and endeavor to make it answer the purpose. For "to," in the same manner, he says "from"; for "with," "of," and so on: at page 2, for example:

> Nor less in winter, mid the glittering banks
> Heaped *of* unspotted snow, the maiden roved.

For "serene," he says "*s*erene"; as at page 4:

> The influences of this *s*erene isle.

For "subdued," he says "*sub*dued": as at page 16:

> So full of thought, so *sub*dued to bright fears.

By the way, what kind of fears *are* bright?

For "eternal," he says "eterne": as at page 30:

> Has risen, *and* an eterne sun now paints.

For "friendless," he substitutes "friend*less*"; as at page 31:

> Are drawn in other figures. Not friend*less*.

To "future," he prefers "fu*ture*": as at page 32:

> Sometime of sorrow. Joy to thy fu*ture*.

To "azure, in the same way, he prefers "*azure*": as at page 46:

Ye stand each separate in the *azure*.

In place of "unheard," he writes "*un*heard": as thus, at page 47:

Or think, tho' *un*heard, that your sphere is dumb.

In place of "perchance," he writes "*per*chance": as at page 71:

When *per*chance sorrow with her icy smile.

Instead of "more infinite," he writes "infin*iter*," with an accent on the "nit," as thus, at page 100:

Hope's child, I summon infin*iter* powers.

And here we might as well ask Mr. Channing, in passing, what idea he attaches to infinity, and whether he really thinks that he is at liberty to subject the adjective "infinite" to degrees of comparison. Some of these days we shall hear, no doubt, of "eternal, eternaler, and eternalest."

Our author is quite enamoured of the word "sumptuous," and talks about "sumptuous trees" and "sumptuous girls," with no other object, we think, than to employ the epithet at all hazards and upon all occasions. He seems unconscious that it means nothing more than expensive, or costly; and we are not quite sure that either trees or girls are, in America, either the one or the other.

For "loved" Mr. C. prefers to say "was loving," and takes great pleasure in the law phrase "the same." Both peculiarities are exemplified at page 20, where he says:

The maid was loving this enamoured same.

He is fond also, of inversions and contractions, and

employs them in a very singular manner. At page 15 he has:

> Now may I thee describe a Paradise

At page 86 he says:

> Thou lazy river, flowing neither way
> Me figurest and yet thy banks seem gay.

At page 143 he writes:

> Men change that Heaven above not more;

meaning that men change so much that Heaven above does not change more. At page 150 he says:

> But so much soul hast thou within thy form
> Than luscious summer days thou art the more

by which he would imply that the lady has so much soul within her form that she is more luscious than luscious summer days.

Were we to quote specimens under the general head of "utter and irredeemable nonsense," we should quote nine-tenths of the book. Such nonsense, we mean, as the following, from page 11:

> I hear thy solemn anthem fall,
> Of richest song upon my ear,
> That clothes thee in thy golden pall
> As this wide sun flows on the mere.

Now let us translate this: He hears (Mr. Channing,) a solemn anthem, of richest song, fall upon his ear, and this anthem clothes the individual who sings it in that individual's golden pall, in the same manner that, or at the time when, the wide sun flows on the mere—which is all very delightful, no doubt.

At page 37, he informs us that,

——It is not living,
To a soul believing,
To change each noble joy,
Which our strength employs,
For a state half rotten
And a life of toys,

And that it is

Better to be forgotten
Than lose equipoise.

And we dare say it is, if one could only understand what kind of equipoise is intended. It is better to be forgotten, for instance, than to lose one's equipoise on the top of a shot tower.

Occupying the whole of page 88, he has the six lines which follow, and we will present any one (the author not excepted,) with a copy of the volume, if any one will tell us what they are all about:

He came and waved a little silver wand,
He dropped the veil that hid a statue fair,
He drew a circle with that pearly hand,
His grace confin'd that beauty in the air,
Those limbs so gentle now at rest from flight,
Those quiet eyes now musing on the night.

At page 102, he has the following:—

Dry leaves with yellow ferns, they are
Fit wreath of Autumn, while a star
Still, bright, and pure, our frosty air
Shivers in twinkling points
Of thin celestial hair
And thus one side of Heaven anoints.

This we think we can explain. Let us see. Dry leaves, mixed with yellow ferns, are a wreath fit for autumn at the time when our frosty air shivers

a still, bright, and pure star with twinkling points of thin celestial hair, and with this hair, or hair plaster, anoints one side of the sky. Yes—this is it—no doubt.

At page 123, we have these lines:

> My sweet girl is lying still
> In her lovely atmosphere;
> The gentle hopes her blue veins fill
> With pure silver warm and clear.
>
> O see her hair, O mark her breast!
> Would it not, *O!* comfort thee,
> If thou couldst nightly go to rest
> By that virgin chastity?

Yes; we think, upon the whole, it would. The eight lines are entitled a "Song," and we should like very much to hear Mr. Channing sing it.

Pages 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41, are filled with short "Thoughts" in what Mr. C. supposes to be the manner of Jean Paul. One of them runs thus:

> How shall I live? In earnestness.
> What shall I do? Work earnestly.
> What shall I give? A willingness.
> What shall I gain? Tranquility.
> But do you mean a quietness
> In which I act and no man bless?
> Flash out in action infinite and free,
> Action conjoined with deep tranquility,
> Resting upon the soul's true utterance,
> And life shall flow as merry as a dance.

All our readers will be happy to hear, we are sure, that Mr. C. is going "to flash out." Elsewhere at page 97, he expresses very similar sentiments:

> My empire is myself and I dyfy
> The external; yes, I rule the whole or die.

It will be observed here, that Mr. Channing's empire is himself, (a small kingdom, however,) that he intends to defy "the external," whatever that is—perhaps he means the infernals—and that, in short, he is going to rule the whole or die; all which is very proper, indeed, and nothing more than we have to expect from Mr. C.

Again, at page 146, he is rather fierce than otherwise. He says:

> We surely were not meant to ride the sea,
> Skimming the wave in that so prisoned small,
> Reposing our infinite faculties utterly.
> Boom like a roaring sunlit waterfall.
> Humming to infinite abysms: speak loud, speak free!

Here Mr. Channing not only intends to "speak loud and free" himself, but advises every body else to do likewise. For his own part, he says, he is going to "*boom*"—"to hum and to boom"—to "hum like a roaring waterfall," and "boom to an infinite abysm." What, in the name of Belzebub, *is* to become of us all?

At page 39, while indulging in similar bursts of fervor and of indignation, he says:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can*,

and this passage we quote by way of instancing what we consider the only misprint in the book. Mr. Channing could never have meant to say:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can;*

for what *is* a delusive show of *can?* No doubt it should have been,

> Thou meetest a little pup
> With a delusive show of tin-cup.

A can, we believe, is a tin-cup, and the cup must have been tied to the tail of the pup. Boys *will* do such tricks, and there is no earthly way of preventing them, we believe, short of cutting off their heads —or the tails of the pups.

And this remarkable little volume is, after all, by William Ellery Channing. A great name it has been said, is, in many cases, a great misfortune. We hear daily complaints from the George Washington Dixons, the Socrates Smiths, and the Napoleon Buonaparte Joneses, about the inconsiderate ambition of their parents and sponsors. By inducing invidious comparison, these *prænomina* get their bearers (so they say) into every variety of scrape. If George Washington Dixon, for example, does not think proper, upon compulsion, to distinguish himself as a patriot, he is considered a very singular man; and Socrates Smith is never brought up before his honor the Mayor without receiving a double allowance of thirty days; while his honor the Mayor can assign no sounder reason for his severity, than that better things than getting toddied are to be expected of Socrates. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones, on the other hand, to say nothing of being called Nota Bene Jones by all his acquaintance, is cowskinned, with perfect regularity, five times a month, merely because people *will* feel it a point of honor to cowskin a Napoleon Buonaparte.

And yet these gentlemen—the Smiths and the Joneses—are wrong *in toto*—as the Smiths and the Joneses invariably are. They are wrong, we say, in accusing their parents and sponsors. They err in attributing their misfortunes and persecutions to the *prænomina*—to the names assigned them at the baptismal font. Mr. Socrates Smith does not receive his double quantum of thirty days because

he is called Socrates, but because he is called Socrates *Smith*. Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones is not in the weekly receipt of a flogging on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte, but simply on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte *Jones*. Here, indeed, is a clear distinction. It is the surname which is to blame, after all. Mr. Smith must drop the Smith. Mr. Jones should discard the Jones. No one would ever think of taking Socrates—Socrates solely—to the watchhouse; and there is not a bully living who would venture to cowskin Napoleon Buonaparte *per se*. And the reason is plain. With nine individuals out of ten, as the world is at present happily constituted, Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) would be taken for the veritable philosopher of whom we have heard so much, and Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) would be received implicitly as the hero of Austerlitz. And should Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) give an opinion upon military strategy, it would be heard with the profoundest respect. And should Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) deliver a lecture or write a book, what critic so bold as not to pronounce it more luminous than the logic of Emerson, and more profound than the Orphicism of Alcott. In fact, both Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, in the case we have imagined, would derive through their own ingenuity, a very material advantage. But no such ingenuity has been needed in the case of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has been befriended by Fate, or the foresight of his sponsors, and who has *no* Jones or Smith at the end of his name.

And here, too, a question occurs. There are many people in the world silly enough to be deceived by appearances. There are individuals so crude

in intellect—so *green*, (if we may be permitted to employ a word which answers our purpose much better than any other in the language,) so green, we say, as to imagine, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, that a volume bearing upon its title-page the name of William Ellery Channing, must necessarily be the posthumous work of that truly illustrious author, the *sole* William Ellery Channing of whom any body in the world ever heard. There are a vast number of uninformed young persons prowling about our book-shops, who will be raw enough to buy, and even to read half through this pretty little book, (God preserve and forgive them!) mistaking it for the composition of another. But what then? Are not books made, as well as razors, to sell? The poet's name *is* William Ellery Channing—is it *not?* And if a man has not a right to the use of his own name, to the use of what has he a right? And could the poet have reconciled it to his conscience to have injured the sale of his own volume by any uncalled-for announcement upon the title-page, or in a preface, to the effect that he is not his father, but only his father's very intelligent son? To put the case more clearly by reference to our old friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. Is either Mr. Smith, when mistaken for Socrates, or Mr. Jones, when accosted as Napoleon, bound, by any conceivable species of honor, to inform the whole world—the one, that he is not Socrates, but only Socrates Smith; the other, that he is by no means Napoleon Buonaparte, but only Napoleon Buonaparte Jones?

WILLIAM WALLACE

AMONG our men of genius whom, because they *are* men of genius, we neglect, let me not fail to mention WILLIAM WALLACE, of Kentucky. Had Mr. W. been born under the wings of that ineffable buzzard, "The North American Review," his unusual merits would long ago have been blazoned to the world—as the far inferior merits of Sprague, Dana, and others of like calibre, have already been blazoned. Neither of these gentlemen has written a poem worthy to be compared with "The Chaunt of a Soul," published in "The Union Magazine" for November, 1848. It is a noble composition throughout—imaginative, eloquent, full of dignity, and well sustained. It abounds in detached images of high merit—for example:

> Your early splendor's gone
> Like stars into a cloud withdrawn—
> Like music laid asleep
> In dried up fountains.....

> Enough, I *am*, and shall not choose to die.
> No matter *what* our future Fate may be,
> To live, is in itself a majesty.....

> And Truth, arising from yon deep,
> Is plain *as a white statue on a tall, dark steep*...

> ————Then
> The Earth and Heaven were fair,
> While only less than Gods seemed all my fellow men.
> Oh, the delight—the gladness—
> *The sense, yet love, of madness*—

The glorious choral exultations—
The far-off sounding of the banded nations—
The wings of angels in melodious sweeps
Upon the mountain's hazy steeps—
The very dead astir within their coffined deeps—
The dreamy veil that wrapt the star and sod—
A swathe of purple, gold, and amethyst—
And, *luminous behind the billowing mist*
Something that looked to my young eyes like God.

I admit that the defect charged, by an envious critic, upon Bayard Taylor—the sin of excessive rhetoricianism—*is*, in some measure, chargeable to Wallace. He, now and then, permits enthusiasm to hurry him into bombast; but at this point he is rapidly improving; and, if not disheartened by the cowardly neglect of those who *dare* not praise a poetical aspirant *with* genius and *without* influence, will soon rank as one of the very noblest of American poets. In fact, he *is* so *now*.

ESTELLE ANNA LEWIS

THE maiden name of Mrs. Lewis was Robinson. She is a native of Baltimore. Her family is one of the best in America. Her father was a distinguished Cuban of English and Spanish parentage, wealthy, influential, and of highly cultivated mind:—from him, perhaps, Mrs. Lewis has inherited the melancholy temperament which so obviously predominates in her writings. Between the death of her father and her present comfortable circumstances, she has undergone many romantic and striking vicissitudes of fortune, which, of course, have not failed to enlarge her knowledge of human nature, and to develop the poetical germ which became manifest in her earliest infancy.

Mrs. Lewis is, perhaps, the best educated, if not the most accomplished of American authoresses—using the word "accomplished" in the ordinary acceptation of that term. She is not only cultivated as respects the usual ornamental acquirements of her sex, but excels as a modern linguist, and very especially as a classical scholar; while her scientific acquisitions are of no common order. Her occasional translations from the more difficult portions of Virgil have been pronounced, by our first Professors, the best of the kind yet accomplished—a commendation which only a thorough classicist can appreciate in its full extent. Her rudimental education was received, in part, at Mrs. Willard's celebrated Academy at Troy; but she is an incessant and very ambitious student, and, in this sense, the

more important part of her education may be said to have been self-attained.

In character, Mrs. Lewis is everything which can be thought desirable in woman—generous, sensitive, impulsive; enthusiastic in her admiration of Beauty and Virtue, but ardent in her scorn of wrong. The predominant trait of her disposition, as before hinted, is a certain romantic sensibility, bordering upon melancholy, or even gloom. In person, she is distinguished by the grace and dignity of her form, and the nobility of her manner. She has auburn hair, naturally curling, and expressive eyes of dark hazel. Her portrait, by Elliot, which has attracted much attention, is most assuredly no flattering likeness, although admirable as a work of art, and conveying a forcible idea of its accomplished original, so far as regards the *tout ensemble.*

At an early age Miss Robinson was allied in marriage to Mr. S. D. Lewis, attorney and counsellor at law; and soon afterwards they took up their residence in Brooklyn, where they have ever since continued to reside—Mr. Lewis absorbed in the labors of his profession, as she in the pleasurable occupations connected with Literature and Art.

Her earliest efforts were made in "The Family Magazine," edited by the well-known Solomon Southwick, of Albany. Subsequently she wrote much for various periodicals—in chief part for "The Democratic Review"; but her first appearance before the public in volume-form, was in the "Records of the Heart," issued by the Appleton's in 1844. The leading poems in this, are "Florence," "Zenel," "Melpomene," "Laone," "The Last Hour of Sappho," and "The Bride of Guayaquil"—all long and finished compositions. "Florence" is, perhaps, the best of the series, upon the whole—

although all breathe the true poetical spirit. It is a tale of passion and wild romance, vivid, forcible, and artistical. But a faint idea, of course, can be given of such a poem by an extract; but we cannot refrain from quoting two brief passages as characteristic of the general manner and tone:

> Morn is abroad; the sun is up;
> The dew fills high each lily's cup,
> Ten thousand flowerets springing there
> Diffuse their incense through the air,
> And smiling hail the morning beam:
> The fawns plunge panting in the stream,
> Or through the vale with light foot spring:
> Insect and bird are on the wing,
> And all is bright, as when in May
> Young Nature holds a holiday.

Again:

> The waves are smooth, the wind is calm;
> Onward the golden stream is gliding
> Amid the myrtle and the palm
> And ilices its margin hiding.
> Now sweeps it o'er the jutting shoals
> In murmurs, like despairing souls,
> Now deeply, softly, flows along,
> Like ancient minstrel's warbling song;
> Then slowly, darkly, thoughtfully,
> Loses itself in the mighty sea.

Among the minor poems in this collection is "The Forsaken," so widely known and so universally admired. The popular as well as the critical voice, ranks it as the most beautiful ballad of its kind ever written.

We have read this little Poem more than twenty times, and always with increasing admiration. *It is inexpressibly beautiful.* No one of real feeling can peruse it without a strong inclination to tears.

Its irresistible charm is its absolute truth—the unaffected naturalness of its thought. The sentiment which forms the basis of the composition, is, perhaps, at once the most universal and the most passionate of sentiments. No human being exists, over the age of fifteen, who has not, in his heart of hearts, a ready echo for all there so pathetically expressed. The essential poetry of the ideas would only be impaired by "foreign ornament." This is a case in which we should be repelled by the mere conventionalities of the Muse. We demand, for such thoughts, the most rigorous simplicity at all points. It will be observed that, strictly speaking, there is not an attempt at "imagery" in the whole poem. All is direct, terse, penetrating. In a word, nothing could be better done. The versification, while in full keeping with the general character of simplicity, has, in certain passages, a vigorous, trenchant euphony which would confer honor on the most accomplished masters of the art. We refer, especially to the lines:

> And follow me to my long home
> *Solemn and slow.*

And the quatrain:

> Could I but know when I am sleeping
> *Low in the ground,*
> One faithful heart would there be keeping
> *Watch all night round.*

The initial trochee here, in each instance, substituted for the iambus, produces, so naturally as to seem accidental, a very effective echo of sound to sense. The thought included in the line "And *light* the tomb," should be dwelt upon to be appreciated in its full extent of beauty; and the verses

which I have italicized in the last stanza, are poetry —poetry in the purest sense of that much misused word. They have power—indisputable power; making us thrill with a sense of their weird magnificence as we read them.

After the publication of the "Records," Mrs. Lewis contributed more continuously to the periodicals of the day—her writings appearing chiefly in the "American Review," and the "Democratic Review," and "Graham's Magazine." In the autumn of 1848, Mr. G. P. Putnam published, in exquisite style, her "Child of the Sea, and Other Poems"—a volume which at once placed its fair authoress in the first rank of American authors. The composition which gives title to this collection is a tale of sea-adventure—of crime, passion, love and revenge—resembling, in all the nobler poetic elements, the "Corsair" of Lord Byron—from which, however, it widely differs in plot, conduct, manner, and expression. The opening lines not only give a general summary of the design, but serve well to exemplify the ruling merits of the composition:—

Where blooms the myrtle and the olive flings
Its aromatic breath upon the air;
Where the sad bird of Night forever sings
Meet anthems for the children of Despair,
Who, silently, with wild dishevelled hair,
Stray through those valleys of perpetual bloom;
Where hideous War and Murder from their lair
Stalk forth in awful and terrific gloom
Rapine and Vice disport on Glory's gilded tomb:

My fancy pensive pictures youthful Love,
Ill-starred yet trustful, truthful and sublime
As ever angels chronicled above:—
The sorrowings of Beauty in her prime;

Virtue's reward; the punishment of Crime;
The dark, inscrutable decrees of Fate;
Despair untold before in prose or rhyme;
The wrong, the agony, the sleepless hate
That mad the soul and make the bosom desolate.

One of the most distinguishing merits of the "Child of the Sea," is the admirable conduct of its narrative—in which every incident has its proper position—where nothing is inconsequent or incoherent—and where, above all, the rich and vivid interest is never, for a single moment, permitted to flag. How few, even of the most accomplished and skilful of poets, are successful in the management of a *story*, when that story has to be told in verse. The difficulty is easily analyzed. In all mere narrations there are particulars of the dullest prose, which are inevitable and indispensable, but which serve no other purpose than to bind together the true interest of the incidents—in a word, *explanatory* passages, which are yet to be "so done into verse" as not to *let down* the imagination from its pride of place. Absolutely to poetize these explanatory passages is beyond the reach of art, for prose, and that of the flattest kind, is their essentiality; but the *skill* of the artist should be sufficient to gloss them over so as to *seem* poetry amid the poetry by which they are surrounded. For this end a very consummate art is demanded. Here the tricks of phraseology—quaintnesses—and rhythmical effects, come opportunely into play. Of the species of skill required, Moore, in his "Alciphron," has given us, upon the whole, the happiest exemplification; but Mrs. Lewis has very admirably succeeded in her "Child of the Sea." I am strongly tempted, by way of showing what I mean, to give here a digest of her narrative, with comments—

but this would be doing the author injustice, in anticipating the interest of her work.

The poem, although widely differing in subject from any of Mrs. Lewis' prior compositions, and far superior to any of them in general vigor, artistic skill, and assured certainty of purpose, is nevertheless easily recognisable as the production of the same mind which originated "Florence" and "The Forsaken." We perceive, throughout, the same passion, the same enthusiasm, and the same seemingly reckless *abandon* of thought and manner which I have already mentioned as characterizing the writer. I should have spoken also, of a fastidious yet most sensitive and almost voluptuous sense of Beauty. These are the *general* traits of "The Child of the Sea"; but undoubtedly the chief value of the poem, to ordinary readers, will be found to lie in the aggregation of its imaginative passages—its quotable points. I give a few of these at random:—the description of sunset upon the Bay of Gibraltar will compare favorably with anything of a similar character ever written:

> Fresh blows the breeze on Tarick's *burnished* bay;
> The *silent* sea-mews bend them through the spray:
> *The Beauty-freighted barges bound afar*
> *To the soft music of the gay guitar.*

I quote further:

> ——the oblivious world of sleep—
> That rayless realm where Fancy never beams—
> *That Nothingness beyond the Land of Dreams. . . .*
>
> Folded his arms across his sable vest,
> *As if to keep the heart within his breast.*
> ——————he lingers by the streams,
> Pondering on incommunicable themes. . . .

Nor notes the fawn that tamely by him glides
The violets lifting up their azure eyes
Like timid virgins whom Love's steps surprise. . . .

And all is hushed—so still—so silent there
That one might hear an angel wing the air. . . .

Adown the groves and dewy vales afar
Tinkles the serenader's soft guitar. . . .

——her tender cares,
Her solemn sighs, her silent streaming tears,
Her more than woman's soft solicitude
To soothe his spirit in its frantic mood. . . .

Now by the crags—then by each pendant bough
Steadies his step adown the mountain's brow. . . .

Sinks on his crimson couch, so long unsought,
And floats along the phantom stream of thought. . . .

Ah, no! for there are times when the sick soul
Lies calm amid the storms that round it roll,
Indifferent to Fate or to what haven
By the terrific tempest it is driven. . . .

The Dahlias, *leaning from the golden vase,*
Peer pensively upon her pallid face,
While the sweet songster o'er the oaken door
Looks through his grate and warbles "weep no more!". . .

——lovely in her misery,
As jewel sparkling up through the dark sea. . . .

Where hung the fiery moon and stars of blood,
And phantom ships rolled on the rolling flood. . . .

My mind by grief was ripened ere its time,
And knowledge came spontaneous as a chime
That flows into the soul, unbid, unsought;
On Earth and Air and Heaven I fed my thought—
On Ocean's teachings—*Ætna's lava tears*—
Ruins and wrecks and nameless sepulchres. . . .

Each morning brought to them untasted bliss.
No pangs—no sorrows came with varying years—
No cold distrust—no faithlessness—no tears—. . .
But hand in hand as Eve and Adam trod
Eden, they walked beneath the smile of God.

It will be understood, of course, that we quote these brief passages by no means as *the best*, or even as particularly excelling the rest of the poem, on an averaged estimate of merit, but simply with a view of exemplifying some of the author's more obvious traits—those, especially, of vigorous rhythm, and forcible expression. In no case can the loftier qualities of a truly great poem be conveyed through the citation of its component portions, in detail, even when long extracts are given—how much less, then, by such mere *points* as we have selected.

"The Broken Heart" (included with "The Child of the Sea") is even more characteristic of Mrs. Lewis than that very remarkable poem. It is more enthusiastic, more glowing, more passionate, and perhaps more abundant in that peculiar spirit of *abandon* which has rendered Mrs. Maria Brooks' "Zophiel" so great a favorite with the critics. "The Child of the Sea" is, of course, by far the more elaborate and more artistic composition, and excels "The Broken Heart" in most of those high qualities which immortalize a work of art. Its narrative, also, is more ably conducted and more replete with incident—but to the delicate fancy or the bold imagination of a poet, there is an inexpressible charm in the latter.

The minor poems embraced in the volume published by Mr. Putnam, evince a very decided advance in *skill* made by their author since the issue of the "Records of the Heart." A nobler poem than the "La Vega" could not be easily pointed out. Its

fierce energy of expression will arrest attention very especially—but its general glow and vigor have rarely been equalled.

Among the author's less elaborate compositions, however, "The Angel's Visit," written since the publication of her "Child of the Sea," is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best—although "The Forsaken" and "La Vega" are scarcely, if at all, inferior.

In summing up the autorial merits of Mrs. Lewis, all critical opinion must agree in assigning her a high, if not the very highest rank among the poetesses of her land. Her artistic ability is unusual; her command of language great; her acquirements numerous and thorough; her range of incident wide; her invention, generally, vigorous; her fancy exuberant; and her imagination—that primary and most indispensable of all poetic requisites—richer, perhaps, than any of her female contemporaries. But as yet—her friends sincerely believe—she has given merely an earnest of her powers.

JOEL T. HEADLEY*

THE REVEREND MR. HEADLEY—(why *will* he not put his full title in his title-pages?) has in his "Sacred Mountains" been reversing the facts of the old fable about the mountains that brought forth the mouse—*parturiunt montes nascetur ridiculus mus*—for in this instance it appears to be the mouse—the little *ridiculus mus*—that has been bringing forth the "Mountains," and a great litter of them, too. The epithet, funny, however, is perhaps the only one which can be considered as thoroughly applicable to the book. We say that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing else, when it spreads over two hundred pages an amount of matter which could be conveniently presented in twenty of a magazine: that a book is a "funny" book—"only this and nothing more"—when it is written in that kind of phraseology, in which John Philpot Curran, when drunk, would have made a speech in at a public dinner: and, moreover, we do say, emphatically, that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing but a funny book, whenever it happens to be penned by Mr. Headley.

We should like to give some account of "The Sacred Mountains," if the thing were only possible —but we cannot conceive that it is. Mr. Headley belongs to that numerous class of authors, who must be read to be understood, and who, for that reason,

* The Sacred Mountains: By J. T. Headley,—Author of "Napoleon and his Marshals," "Washington and his Generals, etc."

very seldom are as thoroughly comprehended as they should be. Let us endeavor, however, to give some general idea of the work. "The design," says the author, in his preface, "is to render more familiar and life-like, some of the scenes of the Bible." Here, in the very first sentence of his preface, we suspect the Reverend Mr. Headley of fibbing: for his design, as it appears to ordinary apprehension, is merely that of making a little money by selling a little book.

The mountains described are Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Hor, Pisgah, Horeb, Carmel, Lebanon, Zion, Tabor, Olivet, and Calvary. Taking up these, one by one, the author proceeds in his own very peculiar way, to *elocutionize* about them: we really do not know how else to express what it is that Mr. Headley does with these eminences. Perhaps if we were to say that he stood up before the reader and "made a speech" about them, one after the other, we should come still nearer the truth. By way of carrying out his design, as announced in the preface, that of rendering "more familiar and life-like some of the scenes" and so-forth, he tells not only how each mountain is, and was, but how it might have been and ought to be in his own opinion. To hear him talk, anybody would suppose that he had been at the laying of the corner-stone of Solomon's Temple—to say nothing of being born and brought up in the ark with Noah, and hail-fellow-well-met, with every one of the beasts that went into it. If any person really desires to know how and why it was that the deluge took place—but especially *how*—if any person wishes to get minute and accurate information on the topic—let him read "The Sacred Mountains"—let him only listen to the Reverend Mr. Headley. He explains to us

precisely how it all took place—what Noah said, and thought, while the ark was building, and what the people, who saw him building the ark, said and thought about his undertaking such a work; and how the beasts, birds, and fishes looked, as they came in arm in arm; and what the dove did, and what the raven did not—in short, all the rest of it: nothing could be more beautifully posted up. What *can* Mr. Headley mean, at page 17, by the remark that "there is no one who does not lament that there is not a fuller antediluvian history?" We are quite sure that nothing that ever happened before the flood, has been omitted in the scrupulous researches of the author of "The Sacred Mountains."

He might, perhaps, wrap up the fruits of these researches in rather better English than that which he employs:

> Yet *still* the water rose around them till all through the valleys nothing but little black islands of human beings *were* seen on the surface . . . The more fixed the irrevocable decree, *the heavier* he leaned on the Omnipotent arm . . . And lo! a solitary cloud comes drifting along the morning sky and *catches* against the top of the mountain . . . At length emboldened by their own numbers they *assembled* tumultuously *together* . . . Aaron never appears *so perfect* a character as Moses . . . As he advanced from rock to rock the sobbing of the multitude that *followed after*, tore his heart-strings . . . Friends were *following after* whose sick Christ had healed . . . The steady mountain threatened *to lift* from its base and be carried away . . . Sometimes God's hatred of sin, sometimes his care for his children, sometimes the discipline of his church, *were* the motives . . . Surely it was his mighty hand that *laid* on that trembling tottering mountain, &c., &c., &c.

These things are not exactly as we could wish them, perhaps:—but that a gentleman should

know so much about Noah's ark and know anything about anything else, is scarcely to be expected. We have no right to require English grammar and accurate information about Moses and Aaron at the hands of one and the same author. For our parts, now we come to think of it, if we only understood as much about Mount Sinai and other matters as Mr. Headley does, we should make a point of always writing bad English upon principle, whether we knew better or not.

It may well be made a question moreover, how far a man of genius is justified in discussing topics so serious as those handled by Mr. Headley, in any ordinary kind of *style*. One should not talk about Scriptural subjects as one would talk about the rise and fall of stocks or the proceedings of Congress. Mr. Headley has seemed to feel this and has therefore elevated his manner—a little. For example:

> The fields were smiling in verdure before his eyes; the perfumed breezes *floated by* . . . The sun is *sailing* over the encampment. . . That cloud was God's pavilion; the thunder was its sentinels; and the lightning the lances' points as they moved round the sacred trust . . . And how could he part with his children whom he had *borne on his brave heart* for more than forty years? . . . Thus everything conspired to render Zion the spell-word of the nation and on its summit the *heart of Israel seemed to lie and throb* . . . The sun died in the heavens; *an earthquake thundered* on to complete the dismay, &c., &c.

Here no one can fail to perceive the beauty (in an antediluvian, or at least in a Pickwickian sense) of these expressions in general, about the floating of the breeze, the sailing of the sun, the thundering of the earthquake and the throbbing of the heart as it lay on the top of the mountain.

The true artist, however, always rises as he pro-

ceeds, and in his last page or so brings all his elocution to a climax. Only hear Mr. Headley's *finale*. He has been describing the crucifixion and now soars into the sublime:

How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell. I know not but tears fell like rain-drops from angelic eyes when they saw Christ spit upon and struck. I know not but there was silence on high for *more* than "half an hour" when the scene of the crucifixion was transpiring,—[a scene, as well as an event, always "transpires" with Mr. Headley]—a silence unbroken save by the solitary sound of some harp-string on which unconsciously fell the agitated, trembling fingers of a seraph. I know not but all the radiant ranks on high, and even Gabriel himself, turned with the deepest solicitude to the Father's face, to see if he was calm and untroubled amid it all. I know not but his composed brow and serene majesty were all that restrained Heaven from one universal shriek of horror when they heard groans on Calvary—*dying* groans. I know not but they thought God had given his glory to another, but one thing I *do* know, [Ah, there *is* really one thing Mr. Headley knows!]—that when they saw through the vast design, comprehended the stupendous scene, the hills of God shook to a shout that never before rung over their bright tops, and the crystal sea trembled to a song that had never before stirred its bright depths, and the "Glory to God in the Highest," was a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.

Here we have direct evidence of Mr. Headley's accuracy not less than of his eloquence. "I know not but that" one is as vast as the other. The one thing that he does know he knows to perfection:—he knows not only what the chorus was (it was one of "hallelujahs and harping symphonies") but also how much of it there was—it was a "sevenfold chorus." Mr. Headley is a mathematical man. Moreover he is a modest man; for he confesses (no doubt with tears in his eyes) that really there is

one thing that he does not know. "How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell." Only think of that! *I* cannot!—*I*, Headley, really cannot tell how the Universe "felt" once upon a time! This is downright bashfulness on the part of Mr. Headley. He *could* tell if he would only try. Why did he not inquire? Had he demanded of the Universe how it felt, can any one doubt that the answer would have been—"Pretty well, I thank you, my dear Headley; how do you feel yourself?"

"Quack" is a word that sounds well only in the mouth of a duck; and upon our honor we feel a scruple in using it:—nevertheless the truth should be told; and the simple fact is, that the author of the "Sacred Mountains" is the Autocrat of all the Quacks. In saying this, we beg not to be misunderstood. We mean no disparagement to Mr. Headley. We admire that gentleman as much as any individual ever did except that gentleman himself. He looks remarkably well at all points—although perhaps best, EXAS—at a distance—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilochus, who died ages before the vagabond was born:—the reader will excuse the digression; but talking of one great man is very apt to put us in mind of another. We were saying—were we not?—that Mr. Headley is by no means to be sneered at as a quack. This might be justifiable, indeed, were he only a quack in a small way—a quack doing business by retail. But the wholesale dealer is entitled to respect. Besides, the Reverend author of "Napoleon and his Marshals" was a quack to some purpose. He knows what he is about. We like perfection wherever we see it. We readily forgive a man for being a fool if he only be a *perfect* fool—and this is a particu-

lar in which we cannot put our hands upon our hearts and say that Mr. Headley is deficient. He acts upon the principle that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well:—and the thing that he "does" especially well is the public.

GEORGE P. MORRIS

THERE are few cases in which mere popularity should be considered a proper test of merit; but the case of song-writing is, I think, one of the few. In speaking of song-writing, I mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with an eye to their adaptation for music in the vulgar sense. In this ultimate destination of the song proper, lies its essence—its genius. It is the strict reference to music—it is the dependence upon modulated expression—which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether *unique*, and separates it, in great measure and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from ordinary literature; rendering it independent of merely ordinary proprieties; allowing it, and in fact demanding for it, a wide latitude of Law; absolutely insisting upon a certain wild license and *indefinitiveness*—an indefinitiveness recognised by every musician who is not a mere fiddler, as an important point in the philosophy of his science—as the *soul*, indeed, of the sensations derivable from its practice—sensations which bewilder while they enthral—and which would *not* so enthral if they did not so bewilder.

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound simply, are out of the reach of analysis —although referable, possibly, in their last result, to that merely mathematical recognition of *equality* which seems to be *the root of all Beauty*. Our impressions of harmony and melody in conjunction, are

more readily analyzed; but one thing is certain—that the *sentimental* pleasure derivable from music, is nearly in the ratio of its indefinitiveness. Give to music any undue *decision*—imbue it with any very *determinate* tone—and you deprive it at once, of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury:—you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up:—you exhaust it of its breath of fäery. It then becomes a tangible and easily appreciable thing—a conception of the earth, earthy. It will not, to be sure, lose *all* its power to please, but all that I consider the *distinctiveness* of that power. And to the *over*-cultivated talent, or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate *nare* will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A *determinateness* of expression is sought—and sometimes by composers who should know better—is sought as a beauty, rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from high authorities, attempts at absolute *imitation* in musical sounds. Who can forget, or cease to regret, the many errors of this kind into which some great minds have fallen, simply through over-estimating the triumphs of *skill*. Who can help lamenting the Battles of Pragues? What man of taste is not ready to laugh, or to weep, over their "guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbusses and thunder?" "Vocal music," says L'Abbaté Gravina, "ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions, rather than the warbling of Canary birds, which our singers, now-a-days, affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences." This is true only so far as the "rather" is concerned. If *any* music must imitate *any thing*, it were undoubt-

edly, better that the imitation should be limited as Gravina suggests.

That *indefinitiveness* which is at least, *one* of the essentials of true music, must, of course, be kept in view by the song-writer; while, by the critic, it should always be considered in his estimate of the *song*. It is, in the author, a consciousness—sometimes, merely an instinctive appreciation, of this necessity for the indefinite, which imparts to all songs, richly conceived, that free, affluent, and *hearty* manner, little scrupulous about niceties of phrase, which cannot be better expressed than by the hackneyed French word *abandonnement*, and which is so strikingly exemplified in both the serious and joyous ballads and carols of our old English progenitors. Wherever verse has been found most strictly married to music, this feature prevails. It is thus the essence of all antique song. It is the soul of Homer. It is the spirit of Anacreon. It is even the genius of Æschylus. Coming down to our own times, it is the vital principle in De Béranger. Wanting this quality, no song-writer was ever truly popular, and, for the reasons assigned, no song-writer need ever expect to be so.

These views properly understood, it will be seen how baseless are the ordinary objections to songs proper, on the score of "conceit," (to use Johnson's word,) or of hyperbole, or on various other grounds tenable enough in respect to poetry not designed for music. The "conceit," for example, which some envious rivals of *Morris* have so much objected to—

> Her heart and morning broke together
> In the storm—

this "conceit" is merely in keeping with the essential spirit of the song proper. To all reasonable persons

it will be sufficient to say that the fervid, hearty, free-spoken songs of Cowley and of Donne—more especially of Cunningham, of Harrington and of Carew—abound in precisely similar things; and that they are to be met with, plentifully, in the polished pages of Moore and of Béranger, who introduce them with thought and retain them after mature deliberation.

Morris is, very decidedly, our best writer of songs—and, in saying this, I mean to assign him a high rank as *poet*. For my own part, I would much rather have written the best *song* of a nation than its noblest *epic*. One or two Hoffman's songs have merit—but they are sad echoes of Moore, and even if this were not so (every body knows that it *is* so) they are totally deficient in the real song-essence. "*Woodman, Spare that Tree*," and "*By the Lake where droops the Willow*" are compositions of which any poet, living or dead, might justly be proud. By these, if by nothing else, Morris is *immortal*. It is quite impossible to put down such things by sneers. The affectation of contemning them is of no avail—unless to render manifest the envy of those who affect the contempt. As mere *poems*, there are several of Morris's compositions equal, if not superior, to either of those just mentioned, but as *songs* I much doubt whether these latter have ever been surpassed. In quiet grace and unaffected tenderness, I know no American poem which excels the following:

Where Hudson's wave o'er silvery sands
  Winds through the hills afar,
Old Crow-nest like a monarch stands,
  Crowned with a single star.
And there, amid the billowy swells
  Of rock-ribbed, cloud-capped earth,
My fair and gentle Ida dwells,
  A nymph of mountain birth.

The snow-flake that the cliff receives—
  The diamonds of the showers—
Spring's tender blossoms, buds and leaves—
  The sisterhood of flowers—
Morn's early beam—eve's balmy breeze—
  Her purity define;—
But Ida's dearer far than these
  To this fond breast of mine.

My heart is on the hills; the shades
  Of night are on my brow.
Ye pleasant haunts and silent glades
  My soul is with you now.
I bless the star-crowned Highlands where
  My Ida's footsteps roam;
Oh, for a falcon's wing to bear—
  To bear me to my home.

ROBERT M. BIRD

BY *The Gladiator*, by *Calavar*, and by *The Infidel*, Dr. Bird has risen, in a comparatively short space of time, to a very enviable reputation; and we have heard it asserted that his novel "*The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow*,"* will not fail to place his name in the very first rank of American writers of fiction. Without venturing to subscribe implicitly to this latter supposition, we still think very highly of him who has written *Calavar*.

Had this novel reached us some years ago, with the title of "*The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Romance by the author of Waverley*," we should not perhaps have engaged in its perusal with as much genuin eagerness, or with so dogged a determination to be pleased with it at all events, as we have actually done upon receiving it with its proper title, and under really existing circumstances. But having read the book *through*, as undoubtedly we should have done, if only for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, and for the sake of certain pleasantly mirthful, or pleasantly mournful recollections connected with *Ivanhoe*, with the *Antiquary*, with *Kenilworth*, and above all, with that most pure, perfect, and radiant gem of fictitious literature, the *Bride of Lammermuir*—having, we say, on this account, and for the sake of these recollections read the novel from beginning to end, from Aleph to Tau, we should have pro-

* The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: a Tradition of Pennsylvania. By the author of Calavar and the Infidel. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard.

nounced our opinion of its merits somewhat in the following manner.

"It is unnecessary to tell us that this novel is written by Sir Walter Scott; and we are really glad to find that he has at length ventured to turn his attention to American incidents, scenery, and manners. We repeat that it was a mere act of supererogation to place the words "By the author of Waverley" in the title-page. The book speaks for itself. The style vulgarly so called—the manner properly so called—the handling of the subject to speak pictorially, or graphically, or as a German would say plastically—in a word, the general air, the *tout ensemble*, the prevailing character of the story, all proclaim, in words which one who runs may read, that these volumes were indited 'By the author of Waverley.'" Having said thus much, we should resume our *critique* as follows: "The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow is, however, by no means in the *best* manner of its illustrious author. To speak plainly it is a positive failure, and must take its place by the side of the Redgauntlets, the Monasteries, the Pirates, and the Saint Roman's Wells."

All this we should perhaps have been induced to say had the book been offered to us for perusal some few years ago, with the supposititious title, and under the supposititious circumstances aforesaid. But alas! for our critical independency, the case is very different indeed. There can be no mistake or misconception in the present instance, such as we have so fancifully imagined. The title page (here we have it) is clear, explanatory, and not to be misunderstood. The "Hawks of Hawk-Hollow, A Tradition of Pennsylvania," that is to say, a novel, is written, so we are assured, not by

the author of "Waverley," but by the author of that very fine romance "Calavar"—not by Sir Walter Scott, Baronet, but by Robert M. Bird, M. D. Now Robert M. Bird is an American.

In regard to that purely mechanical portion of this novel, which it would now be fashionable to denominate its *style*, we have very few observations to make. In general it is faultless. Occasionally we meet with a sentence ill-constructed—an inartincial adaptation of the end to the beginning of a paragraph—a circumlocutory mode of saying what might have been better said, if said with brevity—now and then with a pleonasm, as for example—"And if he wore a mask in his commerce with men, it was like that *iron* one of the Bastile, which when put on, was put on for life, and was at the same time *of iron*,"—not unfrequently with a bull proper, videlicet. "As he spoke there came into the den, eight men attired like the two first *who were included in the number*." But we repeat that upon the whole the style of the novel—if that may be called its style, which style is not—is at least *equal* to that of any American writer whatsoever. In the style *properly* so called—that is to say, in the prevailing tone and manner which give character and individuality to the book, we cannot bring ourselves to think that Dr. Bird has been equally fortunate. His subject appears always ready to fly away from him. He dallies with it continually—hovers incessantly round it, and about it—and not until driven to exertion by the necessity of bringing his volumes to a close, does he finally grasp it with any appearance of energy or good will. The "Hawks of Hawk-Hollow" is composed with great inequality of manner—at times forcible and manly—at times sinking into the merest childishness and imbecility.

Some portions of the book, we surmise, were either not written by Dr. Bird, or were written by him in moments of the most utter mental exhaustion. On the other hand, the reader will not be disappointed, if he looks to find in the novel many—very many well sustained passages of great eloquence and beauty.

The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow, if it add a single bay to the already green wreath of Dr. Bird's *popular* reputation, will not, at all events, among men whose decisions are entitled to consideration, advance the high opinion previously entertained of his abilities. It has no pretensions to *originality* of manner, or of style—for we insist upon the distinction—and very few to originality of matter. It is, in many respects, a bad imitation of Sir Walter Scott. Some of its characters, and one or two of its incidents, have seldom been surpassed, for force, fidelity to nature, and power of exciting interest in the reader. It is altogether more worthy of its author in its scenes of hurry, of tumult, and confusion, than in those of a more quiet and philosophical nature. Like *Calavar* and *The Infidel*, it excels in the drama of action and passion, and fails in the drama of colloquy. It is inferior, as a whole, to the *Infidel*, and vastly inferior to *Calavar*.

We must regard "Sheppard Lee," upon the whole, as a very clever, and not altogether unoriginal, *jeu d'esprit*. Its incidents are well conceived, and related with force, brevity, and a species of *directness* which is invaluable in certain cases of narration—while in others it should be avoided. The language is exceedingly unaffected and (what we regard as high praise) exceedingly well adapted to the varying subjects. Some fault may be found with the con-

ception of the metempsychosis which is the basis of the narrative. There are two general methods of telling stories such as this. One of these methods is that adopted by the author of Sheppard Lee. He conceives his hero endowed with some idiosyncrasy beyond the common lot of human nature, and thus introduces him to a series of adventure which, under ordinary circumstances, could occur only to a plurality of persons. The chief source of interest in such narrative is, or should be, the contrasting of these varied events, in their influence upon a character *unchanging*—except as changed by the events themselves. This fruitful field of interest, however, is neglected in the novel before us, where the hero, very awkwardly, partially loses, and partially does not lose, his identity, at each transmigration. The sole object here in the various metempsychoses seems to be, merely the depicting of seven different conditions of existence, and the enforcement of the very doubtful moral that every person should remain contented with his own. But it is clear that both these points could have been more forcibly shown, without any reference to a confused and jarring system of transmigration, by the mere narrations of seven different individuals. All deviations, especially wide ones, from nature, should be justified to the author by some specific object—the object, in the present case, might have been found, as above-mentioned, in the opportunity afforded of depicting widely-different conditions of existence actuating *one* individual.

A second peculiarity of the species of novel to which Sheppard Lee belongs, and a peculiarity which is *not* rejected by the author, is the treating the whole narrative in a jocular manner throughout (inasmuch as to say "I know I am writing nonsense,

but then you must excuse me for the very reason that I know it,") or the solution of the various absurdities by means of a dream, or something similar. The latter method is adopted in the present instance—and the idea is managed with unusual ingenuity. Still—having read through the whole book, and having been worried to death with incongruities (allowing such to exist) until the concluding page, it is certainly little indemnification for our sufferings to learn that, in truth, the whole matter was a dream, and that we were very wrong in being worried about it at all. The damage is done, and the apology does not remedy the grievance. For this and other reasons, we are led to prefer, in this kind of writing, the *second* general method to which we have alluded. It consists in a variety of points—principally in avoiding, as may easily be done, that *directness* of expression which we have noticed in Sheppard Lee, and thus leaving much to the imagination—in writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth, yet astonished at the immensity of the wonders he relates, and for which, professedly, he neither claims nor anticipates credence—in minuteness of detail, especially upon points which have no immediate bearing upon the general story—this minuteness not being at variance with indirectness of expression—in short, by making use of the infinity of arts which give verisimilitude to a narration—and by leaving the result as a wonder not to be accounted for. It will be found that *bizzarreries* thus conducted, are usually far more effective than those otherwise managed. The attention of the author, who does not depend upon explaining away his incredibilities, is directed to giving them the character and the luminousness of truth, and thus are brought about,

unwittingly, some of the most vivid creations of human intellect. The reader, too, readily perceives and falls in with the writer's humor, and suffers himself to be borne on thereby. On the other hand, what difficulty, or inconvenience, or danger can there be in leaving us uninformed of the important facts that a certain hero *did not* actually discover the elixir vitæ, *could not* really make himself really invisible, and *was not* either a ghost in good earnest, or a bonâ fide wandering Jew?

CORNELIUS MATHEWS*

"WAKONDAH" is the composition of Mr. Cornelius Mathews, one of the editors of the Monthly Magazine, "Arcturus." In the December number of the journal, the poem was originally set forth by its author, very much "*avec l'air d'un homme qui sauve sa patrie.*" To be sure, it was not what is usually termed the *leading* article of the month. It did not occupy that post of honor which, hitherto, has been so moderately filled by "Puffer Hopkins." But it took precedence of some exceedingly beautiful stanzas by Professor Longfellow, and stood second only to a very serious account of a supper which, however well it might have suited the taste of an Ariel, would scarcely have feasted the Anakim, or satisfied the appetite of a Grandgousier. The supper was, or might have been, a good thing. The poem which succeeded it *is not;* nor can we imagine what has induced Messrs. Curry & Co. to be at the trouble of its republication. We are vexed with these gentlemen for having thrust this affair the second time before us. They have placed us in a predicament we dislike. In the pages of "Arcturus" the poem did not come necessarily under the eye of the magazine critic. There is a tacitly-understood courtesy about these matters—a courtesy upon which we need not comment. The contributed papers in any one journal of the class of "Arcturus" are not considered as *debateable* by any

* Wakondah; The Master of Life. A Poem. George L. Curry & Co.: New York.

one other. General propositions, under the editorial head, are rightly made the subject of discussion; but in speaking of "Wakondah," for example, in the pages of our own Magazine, we should have felt as if *making an occasion.* Now, upon our first perusal of the poem in question, we were both astonished and grieved that we could say, honestly, very little in its praise:—astonished, for by some means, not just now altogether intelligible to ourselves, we had become imbued with the idea of high poetical talent in Mr. Mathews:—grieved, because, under the circumstances of his position as editor of one of the *very* best journals in the country, we had been sincerely anxious to think well of his abilities. Moreover, we felt that to *speak ill* of them, under any circumstances whatever, would be to subject ourselves to the charge of envy or jealousy, on the part of those who do not personally know us. We, therefore, rejoiced that "Wakondah" was not a topic we were called upon to discuss. But the poem is republished, and placed upon our table, and these very "circumstances of position" which restrained us in the first place, render it a positive duty that we speak distinctly in the second.

And *very* distinctly shall we speak. In fact, this effusion is a dilemma whose horns *goad* us into frankness and candor—"*c'est un malheur*," to use the words of Victor Hugo, "*d'où on ne pourrait se tirer par des periphrases, par des quemadmodums et des verumenimveros.*" If we mention it at all, we are *forced* to employ the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English." "Wakondah," then, from beginning to end, is trash. With the trivial exceptions which we shall designate, it has *no* merit whatever; while its faults, more numerous than the leaves

of Valombrosa, are of that rampant class which, if any schoolboy *could* be found so uninformed as to commit them, any schoolboy should be remorselessly flogged for committing.

The story, or as the epics have it, the argument, although brief, is by no means particularly easy of comprehension. The design seems to be based upon a passage in Mr. Irving's "Astoria." He tells us that the Indians who inhabit the Chippewyan range of mountains, call it the "Crest of the World," and "think that Wakondah, or the Master of Life, as they designate the Supreme Being, has his residence among these aerial heights." Upon this hint Mr. Mathews has proceeded. He introduces us to Wakondah standing in person upon a mountain top. He describes his appearance, and thinks that a Chinook would be frightened to behold it. He causes the "Master of Life" to make a speech, which is addressed, generally, to things at large, and particularly to the neighboring Woods, Cataracts, Rivers, Pinnacles, Steeps, and Lakes—not to mention an Earthquake. But all these (and, we think, judiciously) turn a deaf ear to the oration, which, to be plain, is scarcely equal to a second-rate Piankitank stump speech. In fact, it is a barefaced attempt at animal magnetism, and the mountains, &c., do no more than show its potency in resigning themselves to sleep, as they do.

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes.

—then he becomes *very* indignant, and accordingly launches forth into speech the second—with which the delinquents are afflicted, with occasional brief interruptions from the poet, in proper person, until the conclusion of the poem.

The *subject* of the two orations we shall be per-

mitted to sum up compendiously in the one term "rigmarole." But we do not mean to say that our compendium is not an improvement, and a very considerable one, upon the speeches themselves—which, taken altogether, are the queerest, and the most rhetorical, not to say the most miscellaneous orations we ever remember to have listened to outside of an Arkansas House of Delegates. In saying this we mean what we say. We intend no joke. Were it possible, we would quote the whole poem in support of our opinion. But as this is *not* possible, and, moreover, as we presume Mr. Mathews has not been so negligent as to omit securing his valuable property by a copyright, we must be contented with a few extracts here and there at random, with a few comments equally so. But we have already hinted that there were really one or two words to be said of this effusion in the way of commendation, and these one or two words might as well be said now as hereafter. The poem thus commences—

> The moon ascends the vaulted sky to-night;
> With a slow motion full of pomp ascends,
> But, mightier than the moon that o'er it bends
> A form is dwelling on the mountain height
> That boldly intercepts the struggling light
> With darkness nobler than the planet's fire,—
> A gloom and dreadful grandeur that aspire
> To match the cheerful Heaven's far-shining might.

If we were to shut our eyes to the repetition of "might," (which, in its various inflections, is a pet word with our author, and lugged in upon all occasions,) and to the obvious imitation of Longfellow's Hymn to the Night, in the second line of this stanza, we should be justified in calling it *good*. The "darkness nobler than the planet's fire" is *certainly* good. The general conception of the

colossal figure on the mountain summit, relieved against the full moon, would be unquestionably *grand* were it not for the *bullish* phraseology by which the conception is rendered, in a great measure, abortive. The moon is described as "ascending," and its "motion" is referred to, while we have the standing figure continuously intercepting its light. That the orb would soon pass from behind the figure, is a physical fact which the purpose of the poet required to be left out of sight, and which scarcely any other language than that which he has actually employed would have succeeded in forcing upon the reader's attention. With all these defects, however, the passage, especially as an opening passage, is one of high merit. Looking carefully for something else to be commended, we find at length the lines—

> Lo! where our foe up through these vales ascends
> Fresh from the embraces of the swelling sea,
> A glorious, white and shining Deity.
> Upon our strength his deep blue eye he bends,
> With threatenings full of thought and steadfast ends;
> *While desolation from his nostril breathes*
> *His glittering rage he scornfully unsheathes*
> *And to the startled air its splendor lends.*

This again, however, is worth only qualified commendation. The first six lines preserve the personification (that of a ship) sufficiently well; but, in the seventh and eighth, the author suffers the image to slide into that of a warrior unsheathing his sword. Still there is *force* in these concluding verses, and we begin to fancy that this is saying a *very* great deal for the author of "Puffer Hopkins."

The best stanza in the poem (there are thirty-four in all) is the thirty-third.

No cloud was on the moon, yet on his brow
A deepening shadow fell, and on his knees
That shook like tempest-stricken mountain trees
His heavy head descended sad and low

Like a high city smitten by the blow
Which secret earthquakes strike and topling falls
With all its arches, towers, and cathedrals
In swift and unconjectured overthrow.

This is, positively, not bad. The first line italicized is bold and vigorous, both in thought and expression; and the last four (although by no means original) convey a striking picture. But then the whole idea, in its general want of keeping, is preposterous. What is more absurd than the conception of a man's head descending *to his knees*, as here described—the thing could not be done by an Indian juggler or a man of gum-caoutchouc—and what is more inappropriate than the resemblance attempted to be drawn between a *single* head descending, and the *innumerable* pinnacles of a falling city? It is difficult to understand, *en passant*, why Mr. Mathews has thought proper to give "cathedrals" a quantity which does not belong to it, or to write "unconjectured" when the rhythm might have been fulfilled by "unexpected," and when "unexpected" would have fully conveyed the meaning which "unconjectured" does not.

By dint of farther microscopic survey, we are enabled to point out one, and alas, *only* one more good line in the poem.

Green dells that into silence stretch away

contains a richly poetical thought, melodiously embodied. We only refrain, however, from declaring, flatly, that the line is not the property of Mr. Mathews, because we have not at hand the volume

from which we believe it to be stolen. We quote the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas in full. They will serve to convey some faint idea of the general poem. The italics are our own.

The spirit lowers and speaks: "*Tremble ye wild Woods*
Ye Cataracts! your *organ-voices* sound!
Deep Crags, in earth by massy tenures bound,
Oh, Earthquake, *level flat!* The peace that broods
Above this world, and steadfastly eludes
Your power, howl Winds and break; the peace that mocks
Dismay 'mid silent streams and voiceless rocks—
Through wildernesses, cliffs, and solitudes.

"Night-shadowed Rivers—lift your dusky hands
And clap them harshly *with a sullen roar!*
Ye thousand Pinnacles and Steeps deplore
The glory that departs! above *you* stands,
Ye Lakes with azure waves and snowy strands,
A power that utters forth his loud behest
Till mountain, lake and river shall attest,
The puissance of a Master's *large commands.*"

So spake the Spirit with a wide-cast look
Of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty;
As if he caught a sight of either sea
And all the subject realm between: then shook
His brandished arms; his stature scarce could brook
Its confine; *swelling wide, it seemed to grow*
As grows a cedar on a mountain's brow
By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took!*

The woods are deaf and will not be aroused—
The mountains are asleep, they hear him not,
Nor from deep-founded silence can be wrought,
Tho' herded bison on their steeps have browsed:
Beneath their banks in *darksome stillness* housed
The rivers loiter like a calm-bound sea;
In anchored nuptials to dumb apathy
Cliff, wilderness and solitude are spoused.

Let us endeavor to translate this gibberish, by way of ascertaining its import, if possible. Or, rather, let us state the stanzas, in substance. The spirit *lowers*, that is to say, *grows angry*, and speaks. He calls upon the Wild Woods to tremble, and upon the Cataracts to sound their voices which have the tone of an organ. He addresses, then, *an* Earthquake, or perhaps Earthquake in general, and requests it to *level flat* all the Deep Crags which are bound by massy tenures in earth—a request, by the way, which any sensible Earthquake must have regarded as tautological, since it is difficult to level anything otherwise than *flat*:—Mr. Mathews, however, is no doubt the best judge of flatness in the abstract, and may have peculiar ideas respecting it. But to proceed with the Spirit. Turning to the Winds, he enjoins them to howl and break the peace that broods above this world and steadfastly eludes their power—the same peace that mocks a Dismay 'mid streams, rocks, et cetera. He now speaks to the night-shadowed Rivers, and commands them to lift their dusky hands, and clap them harshly *with a sullen roar*—and as *roaring* with one's *hands* is not the easiest matter in the world, we can only conclude that the Rivers here reluctantly disobeyed the injunction. Nothing daunted, however, the Spirit, addressing a thousand Pinnacles and Steeps, desires them to deplore the glory that departs, or is departing—and we can almost fancy that we see the Pinnacles deploring it upon the spot. The Lakes—at least such of them as possess azure waves and snowy strands—then come in for their share of the oration. They are called upon to observe—to take notice—that above them stands no ordinary character—no Piankitank stump orator, or anything of that sort—but a Power;—a power, in short, to use the exact

words of Mr. Mathews, "that *utters forth* his loud behest, till mountain, lake and river shall attest the puissance of a Master's *large commands*." *Utters forth* is no doubt somewhat supererogatory, since "to utter" is of itself to emit, or send forth; but as "the Power" appears to be somewhat excited he should be forgiven such mere errors of speech. We cannot, however, pass over his boast about uttering forth his loud behest *till* mountains, lake and river shall obey him—for the fact is that his threat is *vox et preterea nihil*, like the countryman's nightingale in Catullus; the issue showing that the mountains, lakes and rivers—all very sensible creatures—go fast asleep upon the spot, and pay no attention to his rigmarole whatever. Upon the "large commands" it is not our intention to dwell. The phrase is a singularly mercantile one to be in the mouth of "a Power." It is not impossible, however, that Mr. Mathews himself is

> —busy in the cotton trade
> And sugar line.

But to resume. We were originally told that the Spirit "lowered" and spoke, and in truth his entire speech is a scold at Creation; yet stanza the eighth is so forgetful as to say that he spoke "with a wide-cast look of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty." Be this point as it may, he now shakes his brandished arms, and, swelling out, seems to grow—

> As grows a cedar on a mountain's top—
> By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took*

—or as swells a turkey-gobbler; whose image the poet unquestionably had in his mind's eye when he penned the words about the ruffled cedar. As for *took* instead of *taken*—why not say *tuk* at once? We

have heard of chaps vot vas tuk up for sheep-stealing, and we know of one or two that ought to be tuk up for murder of the Queen's English.

We shall never get on. Stanza the ninth assures us that the woods are deaf and will not be aroused, that the mountains are asleep and so forth—all which Mr. Mathews might have anticipated. But the rest he could not have foreseen. He could not have foreknown that "the rivers, housed beneath their banks in *darksome stillness*," would "loiter like a calm-bound sea," and still less could he have been aware, unless informed of the fact that "*cliff, wilderness and solitude would be spoused in anchored nuptials to dumb apathy!*" Good Heavens—no!—nobody could have anticipated *that*! Now, Mr. Mathews, we put it to you as to a man of veracity—what *does* it all mean?

As when in times to startle and revere.

This line, of course, is an accident on the part of our author. At the time of writing it he could not have remembered

To haunt, to startle and waylay.

Here is another accident of imitation; for seriously, we do not mean to *assert* that it is anything more—

I urged the dark red hunter in his quest
Of pard or panther with a gloomy zest;
And while through darkling woods they swiftly fare
Two seeming creatures of the oak-shadowed air,
I sped the game and fired the follower's breast.

The line italicized we have seen quoted by some of our daily critics as beautiful; and so, barring the "oak-shadowed air," it is. In the meantime Campbell, in "Gertrude of Wyoming," has the *words*

—the hunter and the deer a shade.

Campbell stole the idea from our own Freneau, who has the *line*

The hunter and the deer a shade.

Between the two, Mr. Mathews' claim to originality, at this point, will, very possibly, fall to the ground.

It appears to us that the author of "Wakondah" is either very innocent or very original about matters of versification. His stanza is an ordinary one. If we are not mistaken, it is that employed by Campbell in his "Gertrude of Wyoming"—a favorite poem of our author's. At all events it is composed of pentameters whose rhymes alternate by a simple and fixed rule. But our poet's deviations from this rule are so many and so unusually picturesque, that we scarcely know what to think of them. Sometimes he introduces an Alexandrine at the close of a stanza; and here we have no right to quarrel with him. It is not *usual* in this metre; but still he *may* do it if he pleases. To put an Alexandrine in the middle, or at the beginning, of one of these stanzas is droll to say no more. See stanza third, which commences with the verse

Upon his brow a garland of the woods he wears,

and stanza twenty-eight, where the last line but one is

And rivers singing all aloud tho' still unseen.

Stanza the seventh begins thus

The Spirit lowers and speaks—tremble ye Wild Woods!

Here it must be observed that "wild woods" is not meant for a double rhyme. If scanned on the fingers (and we presume Mr. Mathews is in the practice of scanning thus) the line is a ligitimate Alexandrine. Nevertheless, it cannot be *read*. It is like nothing under the sun; except, perhaps, Sir Philip

Sidney's attempt at English Hexameter in his "Arcadia." Some one or two of his verses we remember. For example—

So to the | woods Love | runs as | well as | rides to the | palace;
Neither he | bears reve | rence to a | prince nor | pity to a | beggar,
But like a | point in the | midst of a | circle is | still of a | nearness.

With the aid of an additional spondee or dactyl Mr. Mathews' *very* odd verse might be scanned in the same manner, and would, in fact, be a legitimate Hexameter:

The Spi | rit lowers | and speaks | tremble ye | wild woods.

Sometimes our poet takes even a higher flight and *drops* a foot, or a half-foot, or, for the matter of that, a foot and a half. Here, for example, is a very singular verse to be introduced in a pentameter rhythm—

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes.

Here another—

Yon full-orbed fire shall cease to shine.

Here, again, are lines in which the rhythm demands an accent on impossible syllables.

But ah winged *with* what agonies and pangs. . . .
Swiftly before me *nor* care I how vast. . . .
I see vi*sions* denied to mortal eyes. . . .
Uplifted longer *in* heaven's western glow. . . .

But these are trifles. Mr. Mathews is young and we take it for granted that he will improve. In the meantime what does he mean by spelling lose, *loose*, and its (the possessive pronoun) *it's*—re-iterated instances of which fashions are to be found *passim* in

"Wakondah"? What does he mean by writing *dare*, the present, for *dared*, the perfect?—see stanza the twelfth. And, as we are now in the catachetical vein, we may as well conclude our dissertation at once with a few other similar queries.

What do you mean, then, Mr. Mathews, by

A sudden silence *like a tempest* fell?

What do you mean by a "quivered stream"; "a shapeless gloom"; a "habitable wish"; "natural blood"; "oak-shadowed air"; "customary peers" and "thunderous noises?"

What do you mean by

A sorrow mightier than the midnight skies?

What do you mean by

A bulk that swallows up the sea-blue sky?

Are you not aware that calling the sky as blue as the sea, is like saying of the snow that it is as white as a sheet of paper?

What do you mean, in short, by

Its feathers darker than a thousand fears?

Is not this something like "blacker than a dozen and a half of chimney-sweeps and a stack of black cats," and are not the whole of these illustrative observations of yours somewhat upon the plan of that of the witness who described a certain article stolen as being of the size and shape of a bit of chalk? What do you *mean* by them, we say?

And here, notwithstanding our earnest wish to satisfy the author of Wakondah, it is indispensable that we bring our notice of the poem to a close. We feel grieved that our observations have been so much at random;—but at random, after all, is it alone

possible to convey either the letter or the spirit of that, which, a mere jumble of incongruous nonsense, has neither beginning, middle, nor end. We should be delighted to proceed—but how? to applaud—but what? Surely not this trumpery declamation, this maudlin sentiment, this metaphor run-mad, this twaddling verbiage, this halting and doggerel rhythm, this unintelligible rant and cant! "Slid, if these be your passados and montantes, we'll have none of them." Mr. Mathews, you have clearly mistaken your vocation, and your effusion as little deserves the title of *poem*, (oh sacred name!) as did the rocks of the royal forest of Fontainbleau that of "*mes déserts*" bestowed upon them by Francis the First. In bidding you adieu we commend to your careful consideration the remark of M. Timon, "*que le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique doit lui-même savoir parler Francais.*"

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS*

MR. SIMMS, we believe, made his first, or nearly his first, appearance before an American audience with a small volume entitled "Martin Faber," an amplification of a much shorter fiction. He had some difficulty in getting it published, but the Harpers finally undertook it, and it did credit to their judgment. It was well received both by the public and the more discriminative few, although some of the critics objected that the story was an imitation of "Miserrimus," a very powerful fiction by the author of "Pickwick Abroad." The original tale, however—the germ of "Martin Faber"—was written long before the publication of "Miserrimus." But independently of this fact, there is not the slightest ground for the charge of imitation. The thesis and incidents of the two works are totally dissimilar;—the idea of resemblance arises only from the absolute identity of *effect* wrought by both.

"Martin Faber" was succeeded, at short intervals, by a great number and variety of fictions, some brief, but many of the ordinary novel size. Among these we may notice "Guy Rivers," "The Partisan," "The Yemassee," "Mellichampe," "Beauchampe," and "Richard Hurdis." The last two were issued anonymously, the author wishing to ascertain whether the success of his books (which was great)

* Wiley & Putnam's Library of American Books. No. IV. The Wigwam and the Cabin. By William Gilmore Simms. First Series.

had anything to do with his mere name as the writer of previous works. The result proved that popularity, in Mr. Simms' case, arose solely from intrinsic merit, for "Beauchampe" and "Richard Hurdis" were the most popular of his fictions, and excited very general attention and curiosity. "Border Beagles" was another of his anonymous novels, published with the same end in view, and, although disfigured by some instances of bad taste, was even more successful than "Richard Hurdis."

The "bad taste" of the "Border Beagles" was more particularly apparent in "The Partisan," "The Yemassee," and one or two other of the author's earlier works, and displayed itself most offensively in a certain fondness for the purely disgusting or repulsive, where the intention was or should have been merely the horrible. The writer evinced a strange propensity for minute details of human and brute suffering, and even indulged at times in more unequivocal obscenities. His English, too, was, in his efforts, exceedingly objectionable—verbose, involute, and not unfrequently ungrammatical. He was especially given to pet words, of which we remember at present only "*hug*," "*coil*," and the compound "*old-time*," and introduced them upon all occasions. Neither was he at this period particularly dexterous in the conduct of his stories. His improvement, however, was rapid at all these points, although, on the two first counts of our indictment, there is still abundant room for improvement. But whatever may have been his early defects, or whatever are his present errors, there can be no doubt that from the very beginning he gave evidence of genius, and that of no common order. His "Martin Faber," in our opinion, is a more forcible story than its supposed prototype "Miser-

rimus." The difference in the American reception of the two is to be referred to the fact (we blush while recording it,) that "Miserrimus" was understood to be the work of an Englishman, and "Martin Faber" was known to be the composition of an American as yet unaccredited in our Republic of Letters. The fiction of Mr. Simms gave indication, we repeat, of genius, and that of no common order. Had he been even a Yankee, this genius would have been rendered *immediately* manifest to his countrymen, but unhappily (*perhaps*) he was a southerner, and united the southern pride—the southern dislike to the making of bargains—with the southern supineness and general want of tact in all matters relating to the making of money. His book, therefore, depended entirely upon its own intrinsic value and resources, but with these it made its way in the end. The "intrinsic value" consisted first of a very vigorous imagination in the conception of the story: secondly, in artistic skill manifested in its conduct; thirdly, in general vigor, life, movement—the whole resulting in deep interest on the part of the reader. These high qualities Mr. Simms has carried with him in his subsequent books; and they are qualities which, above all others, the fresh and vigorous intellect of America should and does esteem. It may be said, upon the whole, that while there are several of our native writers who excel the author of "Martin Faber" at particular *points*, there is, nevertheless, not one who surpasses him in the aggregate of the higher excellences of fiction. We confidently expect him to do much for the lighter literature of his country.

The volume now before us has a title which may mislead the reader. "The Wigwam and the Cabin" is merely a generic phrase, intended to designate the

subject matter of a series of short tales, most of which have first seen the light in the Annuals. "The material employed," says the author, "will be found to illustrate in large degree, the border history of the south. I can speak with confidence of the general truthfulness of its treatment. The life of the planter, the squatter, the Indian, the negro, the bold and hardy pioneer, and the vigorous yeoman—these are the subjects. In their delineation I have mostly drawn from living portraits, and, in frequent instances, from actual scenes and circumstances within the memories of men."

All the tales in this collection have merit, and the first has merit of a very peculiar kind. "Grayling, or Murder will Out," is the title. The story was well received in England, but on this fact no opinion can be safely based. "The Athenæum," we believe, or some other of the London weekly critical journals, having its attention called (no doubt through personal influence) to Carey & Hart's beautiful annual "The Gift," found it convenient, in the course of its notice, to speak at length of some one particular article, and "Murder Will Out" probably arrested the attention of the sub-editor who was employed in so trivial a task as the patting on the head an American book—arrested his attention first from its title, (murder being a taking theme with the cockney,) and secondly, from its details of southern forest scenery. Large quotations were made, as a matter of course, and very ample commendation bestowed—the whole criticism proving nothing, in our opinion, but that the critic had not read a single syllable of the story. The *critique*, however, had at least, the good effect of calling American attention to the fact that an American might possibly do a decent thing, (provided the possibility were first admitted

by the British sub-editors,) and the result was first, that many persons read, and secondly, that all persons admired the excellent story in 'The Gift' that had actually been called 'readable' by one of the English newspapers."

Now had "Murder Will Out" been a much worse story than was ever written by Professor Ingraham, still, under the circumstances, we patriotic and independent Americans would have declared it inimitable; but, by some species of odd accident, it happened to deserve all that the British sub-sub had condescended to say of it, on the strength of a guess as to what it was all about. It is really an admirable tale, nobly conceived, and skilfully carried into execution—the best ghost-story ever written *by an American*—for we presume that this is the ultimate extent of commendation to which we, as an humble American, dare go.

The other stories of volume do credit to the author's abilities and display their peculiarities in a strong light, but there is no one of them so good as "Murder Will Out."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL*

WHAT have we Americans accomplished in the way of Satire? "The Vision of Rubeta," by Laughton Osborn, is probably our best composition of the kind: but, in saying this, we intend no excessive commendation. Trumbull's clumsy and imitative work is scarcely worth mention—and then we have Halleck's "Croakers," local and ephemeral—but what is there besides? Park Benjamin has written a clever address, with the title "Infatuation," and Holmes has an occasional scrap, piquant enough in its way—but we can think of nothing more that can be fairly called "satire." Some matters we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque—(the poems of William Ellery Channing, for example)—without meaning a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we should have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the particular of direct and obvious satire, it cannot be denied that we are unaccountably deficient.

It has been suggested that this deficiency arises from the want of a suitable field for satirical display. In England, it is said, satire abounds, because the people there find a proper target in the aristocracy, whom they (the people) regard as a distinct race with whom they have little in common; relishing

* A Fable for the Critics. New York: George P. Putnam.

even the most virulent abuse of the upper classes with a gusto undiminished by any feeling that they (the people) have any concern in it. In Russia, or Austria, on the other hand, it is urged, satire is unknown; because there is danger in touching the aristocracy, and self-satire would be odious to the mass. In America, also, the people who write are, it is maintained, the people who read:—thus in satirizing the people we satirize only ourselves, and are never in condition to sympathize with the satire.

All this is more verisimilar than true. It is forgotten that no individual considers himself as one of the mass. Each person, in his own estimate, is the pivot on which all the rest of the world spins round. We may abuse *the people* by wholesale, and yet with a clear conscience, so far as regards any compunction for offending any one from among the multitude of which that "people" is composed. Every one of the crowd will cry "*Encore!*—give it to them, the vagabonds!—it serves them right." It seems to us that, in America, we have refused to encourage satire—not because what we have had touches us too nearly—but because it has been too pointless to touch us at all. Its namby-pamby-ism has arisen, in part, from the general want, among our men of letters, of that minute *polish*—of that skill in details—which, in combination with natural sarcastic power, satire, more than any other form of literature, so imperatively demands. In part, also, we may attribute our failure to the colonial sin of imitation. We content ourselves—at this point not less supinely than at all others—with doing what not only has been done before, but what, however well done, has yet been done *ad nauseam*. We should not be able to endure infinite

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

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repetitions of even absolute excellence; but what is "McFingal" more than a faint echo from "Hudibras"?—and what is "The Vision of Rubeta" more than a vast gilded swill-trough overflowing with Dunciad and water? Although we are not all Archilochuses, however—although we have few pretensions to the ηχεηντες ιαμβοι—although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves—there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

"The Vision" is bold enough—if we leave out of sight its anonymous issue—and bitter enough, and witty enough, if we forget its pitiable punning on names—and long enough (Heaven knows) and well constructed and decently versified; but it fails in the principal element of all satire—*sarcasm*—because the *intention* to be sarcastic (as in the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and in all the more classical satires) is permitted to render itself manifest. The malevolence *appears*. The author is never very severe, because he is at no time particularly cool. We laugh not so much at his victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. And where a deeper sentiment than mirth is excited—where it is pity or contempt that we are made to feel—the feeling is too often reflected, in its object, from the satirized to the satirist—with whom we sympathize in the discomfort of his animosity. Mr. Osborn has not many superiors in downright invective; but this is the awkward left arm of the satiric Muse. *That* satire alone is worth talking about which at least *appears* to be the genial, good-humored outpouring of irrepressible merriment.

"The Fable for the Critics" just issued, has not the name of its author on the title-page;

and but for some slight fore-knowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims, prejudices and crotchets of Mr. *James Russell Lowell*, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very *loose* a brochure to *him*. The "Fable" is essentially "loose"—ill-conceived and feebly executed, as well in detail as in general. Some good hints and some sparkling witticisms do not serve to compensate us for its rambling plot (if plot it can be called) and for the want of artistic finish so particularly noticeable throughout the work—especially in its versification. In Mr. Lowell's prose efforts we have before observed a certain *disjointedness*, but never, until now, in his verse—and we confess some surprise at his putting forth so unpolished a performance. The author of "The Legend of Brittany" (which is decidedly the noblest poem, of the same length, written by an American) could not do a better thing than to take the advice of those who mean him well, in spite of his fanaticism, and leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are better able to manage them; while he contents himself with that class of poetry for which, and for which alone, he seems to have an especial vocation—the poetry of *sentiment*. This, to be sure, is *not* the very loftiest order of verse; for it is far inferior to either that of the imagination or that of the passions —but it is the loftiest region in which Mr. Lowell can get his breath without difficulty.

Our primary objection to this "Fable for the Critics" has reference to a point which we have already touched in a general way. "The malevolence appears." We laugh not so much at the author's victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. The very title of the book shows the want of a due sense in respect to the

satirical essence, *sarcasm*. This "fable"—this severe lesson—is meant "*for the Critics*." "Ah!" we say to ourselves at once—"we see how it is. Mr. L. is a poor devil poet, and some critic has been reviewing him, and making him feel very uncomfortable; whereupon, bearing in mind that Lord Byron, when similarly assailed, avenged his wrongs in a satire which he called 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' he (Mr. Lowell) imitative as usual, has been endeavoring to get redress in a parallel manner—by a satire with a parallel title—'A Fable for the Critics.'"

All this the reader says to himself; and all this tells *against* Mr. L. in two ways—first, by suggesting unlucky comparisons between Byron and Lowell, and, secondly, by reminding us of the various criticisms, in which we have been amused (rather ill-naturedly) at seeing Mr. Lowell "used up."

The title starts us on this train of thought, and the satire sustains us in it. Every reader versed in our literary gossip, is at once put *dessous des cartes* as to the particular provocation which engendered the "Fable." Miss Margaret Fuller, some time ago, in a silly and conceited piece of Transcendentalism, which she called an "Essay on American Literature," or something of that kind, had the consummate pleasantry, after *selecting* from the list of American poets, *Cornelius Mathews and William Ellery Channing*, for especial commendation, to speak of *Longfellow* as a booby, and of *Lowell* as so wretched a poetaster "as to be disgusting even to his best friends." All this Miss Fuller *said*, if not in our precise words, still in words quite as much to the purpose. *Why* she said it, Heaven only knows—unless it was because she was Margaret Fuller, and wished to be taken for nobody else. Messrs. Long-

fellow and Lowell, so pointedly picked out for abuse as the *worst* of our poets, are, upon the whole, perhaps, our best—although Bryant, and one or two others are scarcely inferior. As for the two favorites, selected just as pointedly for laudation, by Miss F.—it is really difficult to think of them, in connexion with poetry, without laughing. Mr. Mathews once wrote some sonnets "On Man," and Mr. Channing some lines on "A Tin Can," or something of that kind—and if the former gentleman be not the very worst poet that ever existed on the face of the earth, it is only because he is not quite so bad as the latter. To speak algebraically:—Mr. M. is *ex*ecrable, but Mr. C. is x plus I-ecrable.

Mr. Lowell has obviously aimed his "Fable" at Miss Fuller's head, in the first instance, with an eye to its ricochêt-ing so as to knock down Mr. Mathews in the second. Miss F. is first introduced as Miss F——, rhyming to "cooler," and afterwards as "Miranda"; while poor Mr. M. is brought in upon all occasions, head and shoulders; and now and then a sharp thing, although never very original, is said *of* them or *at* them; but all the true satiric *effect* wrought, is that produced by the satirist against himself. The reader is all the time smiling to think that so unsurpassable a—(*what* shall we call her?—we wish to be civil,) a transcendentalist as Miss Fuller, should, by *such* a criticism, have had the power to put a respectable poet in *such* a passion.

As for the plot or conduct of this Fable, the less we say of it the better. It is so weak—so flimsy—so ill put together—as to be not worth the trouble of understanding:—something, as usual, about Apollo and Daphne. Is there *no* originality on the face of the earth? Mr. Lowell's total want of it is shown at all points—very especially in his preface of rhyming

verse written without distinction by lines or initial capitals, (a hackneyed matter, originating, we believe, with Frazer's Magazine:)—very especially also, in his long continuations of some particular rhyme—a fashion introduced, if we remember aright, by Leigh Hunt, more than twenty-five years ago, in his "Feast of the Poets"—which, by the way, has been Mr. L.'s model in many respects.

Although ill-temper has evidently engendered this "Fable," it is by no means a satire throughout. Much of it is devoted to panegyric—but our readers would be quite puzzled to know the grounds of the author's laudations, in many cases, unless made acquainted with a fact which we think it as well they should be informed of at once. Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author.* His fanaticism about slavery is a mere local outbreak of the same innate wrong-headedness which, if he owned slaves, would manifest itself in atrocious ill-treatment of them, with murder of any abolitionist who should endeavor to set them free. A fanatic of Mr. L.'s species, is simply a fanatic for the sake of fanaticism, and *must* be a fanatic in whatever circumstances you place him.

His prejudices on the topic of slavery break out everywhere in his present book. Mr. L. has not the common honesty to speak well, even in a literary sense, of any man who is not a ranting abolitionist.

* This "Fable *for the Critics*"—this *literary* satire—this benevolent *jeu d'esprit* is disgraced by such passages as the following:

> Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred
> Their sons for the rice swamps at so much a head,
> And their daughters for—faugh;

With the exception of Mr. Poe, (who has written some commendatory criticisms on his poems,) no Southerner is mentioned *at all* in this "Fable." It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell's set to affect a belief that there is *no such thing* as Southern Literature. Northerners—people who have really nothing to speak of as men of letters,—are cited by the dozen, and lauded by this candid critic without stint, while Legaré, Simms, Longstreet, and others of equal note are passed by in contemptuous silence. Mr. L. cannot carry his frail honesty of opinion even so far South as New York. All whom he praises are Bostonians. Other writers are barbarians, and satirized accordingly—if mentioned at all.

To show the general *manner* of the Fable, we quote a portion of what he says about Mr. Poe:

> Here comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge—
> Three-fifths of him genius, and two-fifth sheer fudge;
> Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
> In a way to make all men of common sense d—n metres
> Who has written some things far the best of their kind;
> But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

We may observe here that *profound* ignorance on any particular topic is always sure to manifest itself by some allusion to "common sense" as an all-sufficient instructor. So far from Mr. P.'s talking "like a book" on the topic at issue, his chief purpose has been to demonstrate that there exists *no* book on the subject worth talking *about;* and "common sense," after all, has been the basis on which *he* relied, in contradistinction from the *un*common nonsense of Mr. L. and the small pedants.

And now let us see how far the unusual "common sense" of our satirist has availed him in the structure of his verse. First, by way of showing what his

intention was, we quote three accidentally accurate lines:

> But a boy | he could ne | ver be right | ly defined.
> As I said | he was ne | ver precise | ly unkind.
> But as Ci | cero says | he won't say | this or that.

Here it is clearly seen that Mr. L. intends a line of four anapæsts. (An anapæst is a foot composed of two short syllables followed by a long.) With this observation, we will now simply copy a few of the lines which constitute the body of the poem; asking any of our readers to *read them if they can;* that is to say, place the question, without argument, on the broad basis of the very commonest "common sense."

They're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal. . . .
Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits. . .
The one's two-thirds Norseman, the other half Greek. . . .
He has imitators in scores who omit. . . .
Should suck milk, strong will-giving brave, such as runs. . .
Along the far rail-road the steam-snake glide white. . . .
From the same runic type-fount and alphabet. . . .
Earth has six truest patriots, four discoverers of ether. . .
Every cockboat that swims clears its fierce (pop) gundeck at him. . . .
Is some of it pr—— no, 'tis not even prose. . . .
O'er his principles when something else turns up trumps. . .
But a few silly (syllo I mean) gisms that squat 'em. . . .
Nos, we don't want extra freezing in winter. . . .
Plough, dig, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all things new.

But enough:—we have given a fair specimen of the *general* versification. It might have been better—but we are quite sure that it *could not have been worse.* So much for "common sense," in Mr. Lowell's understanding of the term. Mr. L. should not have meddled with the anapæstic rhythm: it is exceedingly awkward in the hands of one who knows nothing about it and who *will* persist in

fancying that he can write it by ear. Very especially he should have avoided this rhythm in satire, which, more than any other branch of Letters, is dependent upon seeming trifles for its effect. Two-thirds of the force of the "Dunciad" may be referred to its exquisite finish; and had "The Fable for the Critics" been, (what it is *not*,) the quintessence of the satiric spirit itself, it would nevertheless, in so slovenly a form, have failed. As it is, no failure was ever more complete or more pitiable. By the publication of a book at once so ambitious and so feeble—so malevolent in design and so harmless in execution—a work so roughly and clumsily yet so weakly constructed—so very different, in body and spirit, from anything that he has written before—Mr. Lowell has committed an irrevocable *faux pas* and lowered himself at least fifty per cent in the literary public opinion.

MR. GRISWOLD AND THE POETS

THAT we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad, that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corollary, of the old dogma, that the calculating faculities are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may be demonstrated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The *highest* order of the imaginative intellect is always preëminently mathematical; and the converse.

The idiosyncrasy of our political position has stimulated into early action whatever practical talent we possessed. Even in our national infancy we evinced a degree of utilitarian ability which put to shame the mature skill of our forefathers. While yet in leading-strings we proved ourselves adepts in all the arts and sciences which promote the *comfort* of the animal man. But the arena of exertion, and of consequent distinction, into which our first and most obvious wants impelled us, has been regarded as the field of our deliberate choice. Our necessities have been mistaken for our propensities. Having been forced to make railroads, it has been deemed impossible that we should make verse. Because it suited us to construct an engine in the first instance, it has been denied that we could compose an epic in the second. Because we were not all Homers in the beginning, it has been somewhat too rashly taken

for granted that we shall be all Jeremy Benthams to the end.

But this is the purest insanity. The principles of the poetic sentiment lie deep within the immortal nature of man, and have little necessary reference to the worldly circumstances which surround him. The poet in Arcady is, in Kamschatka, the poet still. The self-same Saxon current animates the British and the American heart; nor can any social, or political, or moral, or physical conditions do more than momentarily repress the impulses which glow in our own bosoms as fervently as in those of our progenitors.

Those who have taken most careful note of our literature for the last ten or twelve years, will be most willing to admit that *we are* a poetical people; and in no respect is the fact more plainly evinced than in the eagerness with which books professing to compile or select from the productions of our native bards, are received and appreciated by the public. Such books meet with success, at least with sale, at periods when the general market for literary wares is in a state of stagnation; and even the ill taste displayed in some of them has not sufficed to condemn.

The "Specimens of American Poetry," by Kettell; the "Common-place Book of American Poetry," by Cheever; a Selection by General Morris; another by Mr. Bryant; the "Poets of America," by Mr. Keese—all these have been widely disseminated and well received. In some measure, to be sure, we must regard their success as an affair of personalities. Each individual, honored with a niche in the compiler's memory, is naturally anxious to possess a copy of the book so honoring him; and this anxiety will extend, in some cases, to ten or twenty of the

immediate friends of the complimented; while, on the other hand, purchasers will arise, in no small number, from among a very different class—a class animated by very different feelings. I mean the omitted—the large body of those who, supposing themselves entitled to mention, have yet been unmentioned. These buy the unfortunate book as a matter of course, for the purpose of abusing it with a clear conscience and at leisure. But holding these deductions in view, we are still warranted in believing that the demand for works of the kind in question, is to be attributed, mainly, to the general interest of the subject discussed. The public have been desirous of obtaining a more distinct view of our poetical literature than the scattered effusions of our bards and the random criticisms of our periodicals, could afford. But, hitherto, nothing has been accomplished in the way of supplying the *desideratum*. The "specimens" of Kettell were specimens of nothing but the ignorance and ill taste of the compiler. A large proportion of what he gave to the world as American poetry, to the exclusion of much that was really so, was the doggerel composition of individuals unheard of and undreamed of, except by Mr. Kettell himself. Mr. Cheever's book did not belie its title, and was excessively "Common-place." The selection by General Morris was in so far good, that it accomplished its object to the full extent. This object looked to nothing more than single, brief extracts from the writings of every one in the country who had established even the slightest reputation as a poet. The extracts, so far as our truer poets were concerned, were tastefully made; but the proverbial kind feeling of the General seduced him into the admission of an inordinate quantity of the purest

twattle. It was gravely declared that we had more than *two hundred* poets in the land. The compilation of Mr. Bryant, from whom much was expected, proved a source of mortification to his friends, and of astonishment and disappointment to all; merely showing that a poet is, necessarily, neither a critical nor an impartial judge of poetry. Mr. Keese succeeded much better. He brought to his task, if not the most rigorous impartiality, at least a fine taste, a sound judgment, and a more thorough acquaintance with our poetical literature than had distinguished either of his predecessors.

Much, however, remained to be done; and here it may be right to inquire—"What should be the aim of every compilation of the character now discussed?" The object, in general terms, may be stated, as the conveying, within moderate compass, a distinct view of our poetry and of our poets. This, in fact, is the demand of the public. A book is required, which shall not so much be the reflection of the compiler's peculiar views and opinions upon poetry in the abstract, as of the popular judgment upon such poetical works as have come immediately within its observation. It is not the author's business to insist upon his own theory, and, in its support, to rake up from the by-ways of the country the "inglorious Miltons" who may, possibly, there abound; neither, because ill according with this theory, is it his duty to dethrone and reject those who have long maintained supremacy in the estimation of the people. In this view, it will be seen that regard must be paid to the mere *quantity* of a writer's effusions. He who has published much, is not to be omitted because, in the opinion of the compiler, he has written nothing fit for publication. On the other hand, he who has extemporized a

single song, which has met the eye of no one but our bibliographer, is not to be set forth among the poetical magnates, even although the one song itself be esteemed equal to the very best of Bérangér.

Of the two classes of sins—the negative and the positive—those of omission and those of commission—obvious ones of the former class are, beyond doubt, the more unpardonable. It is better to introduce half a dozen "great unknowns," than to give the "cut direct" to a single individual who has been fairly acknowledged as known. The public, in short, seem to demand *such a compendium of our poetical literature as shall embrace specimens from those works alone, of our recognized poets, which, either through accident, or by dint of merit, have been most particularly the subjects of public discussion.* We wish this, that we may be put in condition to decide for ourselves upon the justice or injustice of the reputation attained. In critical opinion much diversity exists; and, although there is one true and tenable critical opinion, there are still a thousand, upon all topics, which, being only the shadows, have all the outlines, and assume all the movements, of the substance of truth. Thus any critic who should exclude from the compendium all which tallied not with his individual ideas of the Muse, would be found to exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of that which the public at large, embracing *all* varieties of opinion, has been accustomed to acknowledge as poesy.

These remarks apply only to the admission or rejection of poetical specimens. The public being put fairly in possession of the matter debated, with the provisions above mentioned, the analysis of individual claims, *so far as the specimens extend*, is not only not unbecoming in the compiler, but a thing to

be expected and desired. To this department of his work he should bring analytical ability; a distinct impression of the nature, the principles, and the aims of poetry; a thorough contempt for all prejudice at war with principle; a poetic sense of the poetic; sagacity in the detection, and audacity in the exposure of demerit; in a word talent *and faith;* the lofty honor which places mere courtesy beneath its feet; the boldness to praise an enemy, and the more unusual courage to damn a friend.

It is, in fact, by the criticism of the work, that the public voice will, in the end, decide upon its merits. In proportion to the ability or incapacity here displayed, will it, sooner or later, be approved or condemned. Nevertheless, the mere *compilation* is a point, perhaps, of greater importance. With the meagre published *aids* existing previously to Mr. Griswold's book, the labor of such an undertaking must have been great; and not less great the industry and general information in respect to our literary affairs, which have enabled him so successfully to prosecute it.

The work before us* is indeed so vast an improvement upon those of a similar character which have preceded it, that we do its author some wrong in classing all together. Having explained, somewhat minutely, our views of the proper mode of compilation, and of the general aims of the species of book in question, it but remains to say that these views have been very nearly fulfilled in the "Poets and Poetry of America," while altogether unsatisfied by the earlier publications.

The volume opens with a preface, which, with

*The Poets and Poetry of America: with an Historical Introduction. By Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

some little supererogation, is addressed "To the Reader"; inducing very naturally the query, whether the whole book is not addressed to the same individual. In this preface, which is remarkably well written and strictly to the purpose, the author thus evinces a just comprehension of the nature and objects of true poesy:

> He who looks on Lake George, or sees the sun rise on Mackinaw, or listens to the grand music of a storm, is divested, certainly for a time, of a portion of the alloy of his nature. The elements of power in all sublime sights and heavenly harmonies, should live in the poet's song, to which they can be transferred only by him who possesses the creative faculty. The sense of beauty, next to the miraculous divine suasion, is the means through which the human character is purified and elevated. *The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, "in words that move in metrical array," is poetry.*

The italics are our own; and we quote the passage because it embodies the *sole true* definition of what has been a thousand times erroneously defined.

The earliest specimens of poetry presented in the body of the work, are from the writings of Philip Freneau, "one of those worthies who, both with lyre and sword, aided in the achievement of our independence." But, in a volume professing to treat, generally, of the "Poets and Poetry of America," some mention of those who versified before Freneau, would of course, be considered desirable. Mr. Griswold has included, therefore, most of our earlier votaries of the Muse, with many specimens of their powers, in an exceedingly valuable "Historical Introduction"; his design being to exhibit as well "*the progress* as the condition of poetry in the United States."

The basis of the compilation is formed of short

biographical and critical notices, with selections from the works of, in all, eighty-seven authors, chronologically arranged. In an appendix at the end of the volume, are included specimens from the works of sixty, whose compositions have either been too few, or in the editor's opinion too *mediocres*, to entitle them to more particular notice. To each of these specimens are appended foot notes, conveying a brief biographical summary, without anything of critical disquisition.

Of the general plan and execution of the work we have already expressed the fullest approbation. We know no one in America who could, or *who would*, have performed the task here undertaken, at once so well in accordance with the judgment of the critical, and so much to the satisfaction of the public. The labors, the embarrassments, the great difficulties of the achievement are not easily estimated by those before the scenes.

In saying that, individually, we disagree with many of the opinions expressed by Mr. Griswold, is merely suggesting what, in itself, would have been obvious without the suggestion. It rarely happens that any two persons thoroughly agree upon any one point. It would be mere madness to imagine that any two could coincide in every point of a case where exists a multiplicity of opinions upon a multiplicity of points. There is no one who, reading the volume before us, will not in a thousand instances, be tempted to throw it aside, because its prejudices and partialities are, in a thousand instances, altogether at war with his own. But when so tempted, he should bear in mind, that had the work been that of Aristarchus himself, the discrepancies of opinion would still have startled him and vexed him as now.

We disagree then, with Mr. Griswold in *many* of his critical estimates; although in general, we are proud to find his decisions our own. He has omitted from the body of his book, some one or two whom we should have been tempted to introduce. On the other hand, he has scarcely made us amends by introducing some one or two dozen whom we should have treated with contempt. We might complain too of a prepossession, evidently unperceived by himself, for the writers of New England. We might hint also, that in two or three cases, he has rendered himself liable to the charge of personal partiality; it is often so *very* difficult a thing to keep separate in the mind's eye, our conceptions of the poetry of a friend, from our impressions of his good fellowship and our recollections of the flavor of his wine.

But having said thus much in the way of fault-finding, we have said all. The book should be regarded as *the most important addition which our literature has for many years received.* It fills a void which should have been long ago supplied. It is written with judgment, with dignity and candor. Steering with a dexterity not to be sufficiently admired, between the Scylla of Prejudice on the one hand, and the Charybdis of Conscience on the other, Mr. Griswold in the "Poets and Poetry of America," has entitled himself to the thanks of his countrymen, while showing himself a man of taste, talent, *and tact.*

THE FEMALE POETS OF AMERICA* is a large volume, to match "The Poets and Poetry of America," "The Prose Authors of America," and

*The Female Poets of America. By Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

"The Poets and Poetry of England,"—all of which have been eminently and justly successful. These works have indisputable claims upon public attention as critical summaries, at least, of literary merit and demerit. Their great and most obvious value, as affording *data* or material for criticism—as mere collections of the best specimens in each department and as records of fact, in relation not more to books than to their authors—has in some measure overshadowed the more important merit of the series: for these works have often, and in fact very generally, the positive merits of discriminative criticism, and of honesty—*always* the more negative merit of strong common-sense. The best of the series is, beyond all question, "The Prose Author of America." This is a book of which any critic in the country might well have been proud, without reference to the mere industry and research manifested in its compilation. These are truly remarkable; but the vigor of comment and force of style are not less so; while more independence and self-reliance are manifested than in any other of the series. There is not a weak paper in the book; and some of the articles are able in all respects. The truth is that Mr. Griswold's intellect is more at home in Prose than Poetry. He is a better judge of fact than of fancy; not that he has not shown himself quite competent to the task undertaken in "The Poets and Poetry of America," or of England, or in the work now especially before us. In this latter, he has done no less credit to himself than to the numerous lady-poets whom he discusses—and many of whom he now first introduces to the public. We are glad, for Mr. Griswold's sake, as well as for the interests of our literature generally, to perceive that he has been at the pains of doing what Northern

critics seem to be at great pains *never* to do—that is to say, he has been at the trouble of doing justice, in great measure, to several poetesses who have not had the good fortune to be born in the North. The notices of the Misses Carey, of the Misses Fuller, of the sisters Mrs. Warfield and Mrs. Lee, of Mrs. Nichols, of Miss Welby, and of Miss Susan Archer Talley, reflect credit upon Mr. Griswold, and show him to be a man not more of taste than—shall we say it?—of courage. Let our readers be assured that, (as matters are managed among the four or five different *cliques* who control our whole literature in controlling the larger portion of our critical journals,) it requires no small amount of *courage*, in an author whose subsistence lies in his pen, to *hint*, even, that anything good, in a literary way, can, by any possibility, exist out of the limits of a certain narrow territory. We repeat that Mr. Griswold deserves our thanks, under such circumstances, for the cordiality with which he has recognized the poetical claims of the ladies mentioned above. He has *not*, however, done one or two of them that *full* justice which, ere long, the public will take upon itself the task of rendering them. We allude especially to the case of Miss Talley. Mr. Griswold praises her highly; and we would admit that it would be expecting of him too much, just at present, to hope for his avowing, of Miss Talley, what *we* think of her, and what one of our best known critics has distinctly avowed—that she ranks already with *the best* of American poetesses, and in time will surpass them all—that her demerits are those of inexperience and excessive sensibility, (betraying her, unconsciously, into imitation,) while her merits are those of unmistakeable *genius*. We are proud to be able to say, moreover, in respect to another

of the ladies referred to above, that one of her poems is *decidedly the noblest poem in the collection*—although the most distinguished poetesses in the land have here included their most praiseworthy compositions. Our allusion is to Miss Alice Carey's "Pictures of Memory." Let our readers see it and judge for themselves. We speak deliberately:—in all the higher elements of poetry—in true imagination—in the power of exciting the only real poetical effect—elevation of *the soul*, in contradistinction from mere excitement of the intellect or heart—the poem in question is the noblest in the book.

"The Female Poets of America" includes ninety-five names—commencing with Ann Bradstreet, the contemporary of the once world-renowned Du Bartas—him of the "nonsense-verses"—the poet who was in the habit of styling the sun the "Grand Duke of Candles"—and ending with "Helen Irving"—a *nom de plume* of Miss Anna H. Phillips. Mr. Griswold gives most space to Mrs. Maria Brooks, (*Maria del Occidente*,) *not*, we hope and believe, merely because Southey has *happened* to commend her. The claims of this lady we have not yet examined so thoroughly as we could wish, and we will speak more fully of her hereafter, perhaps. In point of actual merit—that is to say of actual accomplishment, without reference to mere indications of the ability to accomplish—we would rank the first dozen or so in this order—(leaving out Mrs. Brooks for the present). Mrs. Osgood—*very decidedly first*—then Mrs. Welby, Miss Carey, (or the Misses Carey,) Miss Talley, Mrs. Whitman, Miss Lynch, Miss Frances Fuller, Miss Lucy Hooper, Mrs. Oakes Smith, Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Hewitt, Miss Clarke, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. Warfield,

(with her sister, Mrs. Lee,) Mrs. Eames, and Mrs. Sigourney. If Miss Lynch had as much imagination as energy of expression and artistic power, we would place her next to Mrs. Osgood. The next *skilful merely*, of those just mentioned, are Mrs. Osgood, Miss Lynch, and Mrs. Sigourney. The most imaginative are Miss Carey, Mrs. Osgood, Miss Talley, and Miss Fuller. The most accomplished are Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Eames, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Whitman, and Mrs. Oakes Smith. The most popular are Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Oakes Smith, and Miss Hooper.

MR. LONGFELLOW AND OTHER PLAGIARISTS

A DISCUSSION WITH "OUTIS"

FOR the "Evening Mirror" of January 14, (1846), before my editorial connexion with the "Broadway Journal," I furnished a brief criticism on Professor Longfellow's "Waif." In the course of my observations, I collated a poem called "*The* Death-Bed," and written by Hood, with one by Mr. Aldrich, entitled "A Death-Bed." The criticism ended thus:

> We conclude our notes on the "Waif," with the observation that, although full of beauties, it is infected with a *moral taint*—or is this a mere freak of our own fancy? We shall be pleased if it be so;—but there *does* appear, in this little volume, a very careful avoidance of all American poets who may be supposed especially to interfere with the claims of Mr. Longfellow. These men Mr. Longfellow can continuously *imitate* (*is* that the word?) and yet never even incidentally commend.

Much discussion ensued. A friend of Mr. Longfellow's penned a defence, which had at least the merit of being thoroughly impartial; for it defended Mr. L., not only from the one-tenth of very moderate disapproval in which I had indulged, but from the nine-tenths of my enthusiastic admiration into the bargain. The fact is, if I was *not* convinced that in ninety-nine hundredths of all that I had written about Mr. Longfellow I was decidedly in the wrong, at least it was no fault of Mr. Longfellow's very luminous friend. This well-intended defence was

published in the "Mirror," with a few words of preface by Mr. Willis, and of postscript by myself. Still dissatisfied, Mr. L., through a second friend, addressed to Mr. Willis an expostulatory letter, of which the "Mirror" printed only the following portion:

> It has been asked, perhaps, why Lowell was neglected in this collection? Might it not as well be asked why Bryant, Dana and Halleck were neglected? The answer is obvious to any one who candidly considers the character of the collection. It professed to be, according to the Poem, from the humbler poets; and it was intended to embrace pieces that were anonymous, or which were easily accessible to the general reader—the *waifs* and *estrays* of literature. To put anything of Lowell's, for example, into a collection of *waifs* would be a particular liberty with pieces which are all collected and christened.

Not yet content, or misunderstanding the tenor of some of the wittily-*put* comments which accompanied the quotation, the aggrieved poet, through one of the two friends as before, or perhaps through a third, finally prevailed on the good nature of Mr. Willis to publish an explicit declaration of his disagreement with "*all* the disparagement of Longfellow which had appeared in the criticism in question.

Now when we consider that many of the points of censure made by me in this *critique* were absolutely as plain as the nose upon Mr. Longfellow's face—that it was impossible to gainsay them—that we defied him and his coadjutors to say a syllable in reply to them—and that they held their tongues and not a syllable said—when we consider all this, I say, then the satire of the "*all*" in Mr. Willis's manifesto becomes apparent at once. Mr. Longfellow did not see it, and I presume his friends did not see it. I did. In my mind's eye it expanded itself thus;—"My

dear Sir, or Sirs, what will you have? you are an insatiable set of cormorants, it is true; but if you will only let me know what you desire, I will satisfy you, if I die for it. Be quick!—merely say what it is you wish me to admit, and (for the sake of getting rid of you) I will admit it upon the spot. Come! I will grant at once that Mr. Longfellow is Jupiter Tonans, and that his three friends are the Graces, or the Furies, whichever you please. As for a fault to be found with either of you, *that* is impossible, and I say so. I disagree with *all*—with every syllable of the disparagement that ever has been whispered against you up to this date, and (not to stand upon trifles) with all that ever *shall* be whispered against you henceforward, forever and forever. May I hope at length that these assurances will be sufficient?" But if Mr. Willis really hoped anything of the kind he was mistaken.

In the meantime Mr. Briggs, in the "Broadway Journal"—did me the honor of taking me to task for what he supposed to be my insinuations against Mr. Aldrich. My reply (in the "Mirror") prefaced by a few words from Mr. Willis, ran as follows:

Much interest has been given in our literary circles of late to the topic of plagiarism. About a month ago a very eminent critic connected with this paper, took occasion to point out a *parallelism* between certain lines of Thomas Hood, and certain others which appeared in the collection of American poetry edited by Mr. Griswold. Transcribing the passages, he ventured the assertion that "*somebody* is a thief." The matter had been nearly forgotten, if not altogether so, when a good-natured friend" of the American author (whose name had by us never been mentioned) considered it advisable to re-collate the passages, with the view of convincing

the public (and himself) that no plagiarism is chargeable to the party of whom he thinks it chivalrous to be the "good-natured friend." For our own part, should *we* ever be guilty of an indiscretion of this kind, we deprecate all aid from our "good-natured friends"—but in the mean time it is rendered necessary that once again we give publicity to the collation of poems in question. Mr. Hood's lines run thus:

We watched her breathing through the night,
  Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
  Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seemed to speak,
  So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
  To eke her being out.

Our very hope belied our fears;
  Our fears our hope belied;
We thought her dying when she slept,
  And sleeping when she died.

But when the morn came dim and sad,
  And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed;—she had
  Another morn than ours.

Mr. Aldrich's thus:—

Her sufferings ended with the day,
  Yet lived she at its close,
And breathed the long, long night away
  In statue-like repose;

But when the sun in all its state
  Illumed the eastern skies,
She passed through Glory's morning gate,
  And walked in paradise.

And here, to be sure, we might well leave a decision in the case to the verdict of common sense. But since the "Broadway Journal" insists upon the "no resemblance," we are constrained to point out especially where our supposed similarity lies. In the first place, then, the subject in both pieces is *death*. In the second, it is the death of a woman. In the third, it is the death of a woman *tranquilly* dying. In the fourth, it is the death of a woman who lies tranquilly *throughout the night*. In the fifth, it is the death of a woman whose "*breathing* soft and low is watched through the night," in the one instance, and who "*breathed* the long long night away in statue-like repose" in the other. In the sixth place, in both poems this woman dies just at daybreak. In the seventh place, dying just at daybreak, this woman, in both cases, steps directly into Paradise. In the eighth place, all these identities of circumstance are related in identical rhythms. In the ninth place, these identical rhythms are arranged in identical metres; and, in the tenth place, these identical rhythms and metres are constructed into identical stanzas.

At this point the matter rested for a fortnight, when a fourth friend of Mr. Longfellow took up the cudgels for him and Mr. Aldrich conjointly, in another communication to the "Mirror." I copy it in full.

PLAGIARISM.—*Dear Willis*—Fair play is a jewel, and I hope you will let us have it. I have been much amused, by some of the efforts of your critical friend, to convict Longfellow of imitation, and Aldrich and others, of plagiarism. What *is* plagiarism? And what constitutes a good ground for the charge? Did no two men ever think alike without stealing one from the other? or, thinking alike, did no two men ever use the same, or similar words, to convey the thoughts, and that, without any communication with each other? To deny it would be absurd. It is a thing of every day occurrence. Some years ago, a letter was written from some part of New England, describing one of those scenes, not very common during what is called "the January thaw," when the snow, mingled with rain, and freezing as it falls, forms a perfect covering of ice

upon every object. The storm clears away suddenly, and the moon comes up. The letter proceeds—"*every tree and shrub, as far as the eye can reach, of pure transparent glass—a perfect garden of moving, waving, breathing crystals. . . . Every tree is a diamond chandelier, with a whole constellation of stars clustering to every socket*," &c. This letter was laid away where such things usually are, in a private drawer, and did not see the light for many years. But the very next autumn brought out, among the splendid annuals got up in the country, a beautiful poem from Whittier, describing the same, or rather a similar scene, in which this line:

The trees, like crystal chandeliers,

was put in italics by every reviewer in the land, for the exceeding beauty of the imagery. Now *the letter* was written, probably, about the same time with the *poem*, though the poem was not published till nearly a year after. The writers were not, and never have been, acquainted with each other, and neither could possibly have seen the work of the other before writing. Now, was there any plagiarism here? Yet there are plenty of "*identities*." The author of the letter, when urged, some years after, to have it published, consented very reluctantly, through fear that *he* should be charged with theft; and, very probably, the charge has been made, though I have never seen it. May not this often occur? What is more natural? Images are not created, but suggested. And why not the same images, when the circumstances are precisely the same, to different minds? Perhaps your critic will reply, that the case is different after one of the compositions is published. How so? Does he or you, or anybody read everything that is published? I am a great admirer, and a general reader of poetry. But, by what accident I do not know, I had never seen the beautiful lines of Hood, till your critical friend brought them to my notice in the Mirror. It is certainly possible that Aldrich had not seen them several years ago—and more than probable that Hood had not seen Aldrich's. Yet your friend affects great sympathy for both, in view of their better compunctions of conscience, for their literary piracies.

But, after all, wherein does the real resemblance between these two compositions consist? Mr. ——, I had almost

named him, finds nearly a dozen points of resemblance. But when he includes rhythm, metre and stanza among the dozen, he only shows a bitter resolution to make out a case, and not a disposition to do impartial justice. Surely the critic himself who is one of our finest *poets*, does not mean to deny that these mere externals are the common property of all bards. He does not feel it necessary to strike out a new stanza, or to invent new feet and measures, whenever he would clothe his "breathing thoughts in words that burn." Again, it is not improbable that, within the period of time since these two writers, Hood and Aldrich, came on the stage, ten thousand *females* have *died*, and *died tranquilly*, and *died just at daybreak*, and that *after passing a tranquil night*, and, so dying, were supposed by their friends to have passed at once to a better world, a *morning in heaven*. The poets are both describing an actual, and not an imaginary occurrence. And here—including those before mentioned, which are common property—are *nine* of the critic's *identities*, which go to make up the evidence of plagiarism. The last six, it requires no stretch of the imagination to suppose, they might each have seen and noticed separately. The most of them, one other poet at least, *has* noticed, many years ago, in a beautiful poem on these words of the angel to the wrestling Jacob—"Let me go, for the day breaketh." Wonder if Hood ever saw that? The few remaining "identities" are, to my mind, sufficiently disposed of by what I have already said. I confess I was not able, until the appearance of the critic's second paper, in which he brought them out specially, "marked, numbered, and labelled," to perceive the resemblance on which the grave charge of literary piracy, and moral dishonesty of the meanest kind was based. In view of all the glaring improbabilities of such a case, a critic should be very slow to make such a charge. I say *glaring improbabilities*, for it seems to me that no circumstantial evidence could be sufficient to secure a verdict of *theft* in such a case. Look at it. A man, who aspires to fame, who seeks the esteem and praise of the world, and lives upon his reputation, as his vital element, attempts to win his object—how? By stealing, in open day, the finest passages, the most beautiful thoughts, (no others are worth stealing,) and the rarest images of another, and claiming them as his

own; and that too, when he knows that every competitor for fame, and every critical tribunal in the world, as well as the real owner, will be ready to *identify* the borrowed plumes in a moment, and cry him down as a *thief*. A madman, an idiot, if he were capable of such an achievement, might do it, but no other. A rogue may steal what he can conceal in his pocket, or his chest—but one must be utterly *non compos*, to steal a splendid shawl, or a magnificent plume, which had been admired by thousands for its singular beauty, for the purpose of sporting it in Broadway. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases of a thousand, such charges are absurd, and indicate rather the carping littleness of the critic, than the delinquency of his victim.

Pray did you ever think the worse of Dana because your friend, John Neal, charged him with pirating upon Paul Allen, and Bryant too, in his poem of "THE DYING RAVEN?" or of yourself, because the same friend thought he had detected you in the very act of stealing from Pinckney, and Miss Francis, now Mrs. Child? Surely not. Everybody knows that John Neal wishes to be supposed to have read everything that ever was written, and never have forgotten anything. He delights, therefore, in showing up such resemblances.

And now—for the matter of Longfellow's imitations—In what do they consist? The critic is not very specific in this charge. Of what kind are they? Are they imitations of thought? Why not call them *plagiarisms* then, and show them up? Or are they only verbal imitations of style? Perhaps *this* is one of them, in his poem on the "Sea Weed."

> ———*drifting, drifting, drifting*
> On the shifting
> Currents of the restless main.

resembling, in form and collocation only, a line in a beautiful and very powerful poem of MR. EDGAR A. POE. (Write it rather EDGAR, a *Poet*, and then it is right to a T.) I have not the poem before me, and have forgotten its title. But he is describing a magnificent intellect in ruins, if I remember rightly—and, speaking of the eloquence of its better days, represents it as

> ———*flowing, flowing, flowing*
> Like a river.

Is this what the critic means? Is it *such* imitations as this that he alludes to? If not, I am at fault, either in my reading of Longfellow, or in my general familiarity with the American Poets. If this *be* the kind of imitation referred to, permit me to say, the charge is too paltry for any man, who valued his reputation either as a gentleman or a scholar, to make. Who, for example, would wish to be guilty of the littleness of detracting from the uncommon merit of that remarkable poem of this same Mr. Poe's, recently published in the Mirror, from the American Review, entitled "THE RAVEN," by charging *him* with the paltriness of imitation? And yet, some snarling critic, who might envy the reputation he had not the genius to secure for himself, might refer to the frequent, very forcible, but rather quaint repetition, in the last two lines of many of the stanzas, as a palpable imitation of the manner of Coleridge, in several stanzas of *the Ancient Mariner*. Let me put them together. Mr. Poe says—

> Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore,
> Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore

And again—

> It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore—
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore.

Mr. Coleridge says, (running two lines into one:)

> For all averred I had killed the bird, that made the breeze to blow,
> "Ah, wretch!" said they, "the bird to slay, and made the breeze to blow."

And again—

> They all averred I had killed the bird, that brought the fog and mist.
> "'Twas right," said they, "such birds to slay, that bring the fog and mist."

I have before me an anonymous poem, which I first saw some five years ago, entitled "The Bird of the Dream." I should like to transcribe the whole—but it is too long. The author was awaked from sleep by the song of a beautiful bird, sitting on the sill of his window—the sweet notes had mingled with his dreams, and brought to his remembrance, the sweeter voice of his lost "CLARE." He says—

And thou wert in my dream—a spirit thou didst seem—
The spirit of a friend long since departed;
Oh; she was fair and bright, but she left me one dark night—
She left me all alone, and broken-hearted.....

My dream went on, and thou went a warbling too,
Mingling the harmonies of earth and heaven;
Till *away—away—away*—beyond the realms of day—
My angel CLARE to my embrace was given.....

Sweet bird from realms of light, oh! come again to-night,
Come to my window—perch upon my chair—
Come give me back again that deep impassioned strain
That tells me thou hast seen and loved my CLARE.

Now I shall not charge Mr. Poe with plagiarism—for, as I have said, such charges are perfectly absurd. Ten to one, he never saw this before. But let us look at the "*identities*" that may be made out between this and "THE RAVEN." *First*, in each case, the poet is a broken-hearted lover. *Second*, that lover longs for some hereafter communion with the departed. *Third*, there is a bird. *Fourth*, the bird is at the poet's window. *Fifth*, the bird being at the poet's window, makes a noise. *Sixth*, making a noise, attracts the attention of the poet; who, *Seventh*, was half asleep, dosing, dreaming. *Eighth*, the poet invites the bird to come in. *Ninth*, a confabulation ensues. *Tenth*, the bird is supposed to be a visitor from the land of spirits. *Eleventh*, allusion is made to the departed. *Twelfth*, intimation is given that the bird knew something of the departed. *Thirteenth*, that he knew her worth and loveliness. *Fourteenth*, the bird seems willing to linger with the poet. *Fifteenth*, there is a repetition, in the second and fourth lines, of a part, and that the emphatic part, of the first and third. Here is a round baker's-dozen (and one to spare) of *identities*, to offset the dozen found between Aldrich and Hood, and that too, without a word of *rhythm*, metre or stanza, which should never form a part of such a comparison. Moreover, this same poem contains an example of that kind of repetition, which I have supposed the critic meant to charge upon Longfellow as one of his imitations—

Away—away—away, &c.

I might pursue it further. But I will not. Such criticisms only make the *author* of them contemptible, without soiling a plume in the cap of his victim. I have selected this poem of Mr. Poe's, for illustrating my remarks, because it is recent, and must be familiar to all the lovers of true poetry hereabouts. It is remarkable for its power, beauty, and originality, (out upon the automaton owl that has presumed to croak out a miserable parody—I commend him to the tender mercies of Haynes Bayley,*) and shows more forcibly than any which I can think of, the absurdity and shallowness of this kind of criticism. One word more, —though acquainted with Mr. Longfellow, I have never seen Mr. Aldrich, nor do I even know in what part of the country he resides; and I have no acquaintance with Mr. Poe. I have written what I have written from no personal motives, but simply because, from my earliest reading of reviews and critical notices, I have been disgusted with this wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason. I scarcely remember an instance where the resemblances detected were not exceedingly far-fetched and shadowy, and only perceptible to a mind pre-disposed to suspicion, and accustomed to splitting hairs. OUTIS.

What I admire in this letter is the gentlemanly grace of the manner, and the chivalry which has prompted its composition. What I do not admire is all the rest. In especial, I do not admire the desperation of the effort to make out a case. No gentleman should degrade himself, on any grounds, to the paltriness of *ex-parte* argument; and I shall not insult Outis at the outset, by assuming for a moment that he (Outis) is weak enough, to suppose me (Poe) silly enough, to look upon all this abominable rigmarole as anything better than a very respectable specimen of special pleading.

As a general rule in a case of this kind, I should wish to begin with the beginning, but as I have been unable, in running my eye over Outis's remarks, to

* I would be a Parody, written by a ninny,
Not worth a penny, and sold for a guinea, &c.

discover that they have any beginning at all, I shall be pardoned for touching them in the order which suits me best. Outis need not have put himself to the trouble of informing his readers that he has "some acquaintance with Mr. Longfellow." It was needless also to mention that he did not know *me*. I thank him for his many flatteries—but of their inconsistency I complain. To speak of me in one breath as a poet, and in the next to insinuate charges of "carping littleness," is simply to put forth a flat paradox. When a plagiarism is committed and detected, the word "littleness," and other similar words, are immediately brought into play. To the words themselves I have no objection whatever; but their application might occasionally be improved.

Is it altogether impossible that a critic be instigated to the exposure of a plagiarism, or still better, of plagiarism generally wherever he meets it, by a strictly honorable and even charitable motive? Let us see. A theft of this kind is commited—for the present we will admit the *possibility* that a theft of this character can be committed. The chances of course are, that an established author steals from an unknown one, rather than the converse; for in proportion to the circulation of the original, is the risk of the plagiarism's detection. The person about to commit the theft, hopes for impunity altogether on the ground of the reconditeness of the source from which he thieves. But this obvious consideration is rarely borne in mind. We read a certain passage in a certain book. We meet a passage nearly similar, in another book. The first book is not at hand, and we cannot compare dates. We decide by what we fancy the probabilities of the case. The one author is a distinguished man—our sympathies are always in favor of distinction. "It

is not likely," we say in our hearts, "that so distinguished a personage as A. would be guilty of plagiarism from this B. of whom nobody in the world has ever heard." We give judgment, therefore, at once against B. of whom nobody in the world has ever heard; and it is for the very reason that nobody in the world *has* ever heard of him, that, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, the judgment so precipitously given is erroneous. Now then the plagiarist has not merely committed a wrong in itself—a wrong whose incomparable meanness would deserve exposure on absolute grounds—but he, the guilty, the successful, the eminent, has fastened the degradation of his crime—the retribution which should have overtaken it in his own person—upon the guiltless, the toiling, the unfriended struggler up the mountainous path of Fame. Is not sympathy for the plagiarist, then, about as sagacious and about as generous as would be sympathy for the murderer whose exalted escape from the noose of the hangman should be the cause of an innocent man's being hung? And because I, for one, should wish to throttle the guilty with the view of letting the innocent go, could it be considered proper on the part of any "acquaintance of Mr. Longfellow's" who came to witness the execution—could it be thought, I say, either chivalrous or decorous on the part of this "acquaintance" to get up against me a charge of "carping littleness," while we stood amicably together at the foot of the gallows?

In all this I have taken it for granted that such a sin as plagiarism exists. We are informed by Outis, however, it does *not*. "I shall not charge Mr. Poe with plagiarism," he says, "for, as I have said, such charges are perfectly absurd." An assertion of this kind is certainly *funny*, (I am aware of no other

epithet which precisely applies to it;) and I have much curiosity to know if Outis is prepared to swear to its truth—holding right aloft his hand, of course, and kissing the back of D'Israeli's "Curiosities," or the "*Mélanges*," of Suard and André. But if the assertion is funny (and it *is*) it is by no means an original thing. It is precisely, in fact, what all the plagiarists and all the "acquaintances" of the plagiarists since the flood, have maintained with a very praiseworthy resolution. The attempt to *prove*, however, by reasoning *à priori*, that plagiarism cannot exist, is too good an idea on the part of Outis not to be a plagiarism in itself. Are we mistaken? —or have we seen the following words before in Joseph Miller, where that ingenious gentleman is bent upon demonstrating that a leg of mutton is and ought to be a turnip?

> A man who aspires to fame, etc., attempts to win his object—how? By stealing, *in open day*, the finest passages, the most beautiful thoughts, (no others are worth stealing,) and claiming them as his own; and that too when he *knows* that every competitor, etc., will be ready to cry him down as a thief.

Is it possible?—is it conceivable that Outis does not here see the begging of the whole question? Why, *of course*, if the theft had to be committed "*in open day*" it would not be committed; and if the thief "*knew*" that every one would cry him down, he would be too excessive a fool to make even a decent thief if he indulged his thieving propensities in any respect. But he thieves at night—in the dark—and *not* in the open day, (if he suspects it,) and he does not know that he will be detected at all. Of the class of wilful plagiarists nine out of ten are authors of established reputation, who plunder recondite, neglected, or forgotten books.

"I shall not accuse Mr. Poe of plagiarism," says Outis, "for, as I have observed before, such charges are perfectly absurd"—and Outis is certainly right in dwelling on the point that he has observed this thing before. It is the one original point of his essay—for I really believe that no one else was ever silly enough to "observe it before."

Here is a gentleman who writes in certain respects as a gentleman should, and who yet has the effrontery to base a defence of a friend from the charge of plagiarism, on the broad ground that no such thing as plagiarism ever existed. I confess that to an assertion of this nature there is no little difficulty in getting up a reply. What in the world can a man say in a case of this kind?—he cannot of course give utterance to the first epithets that spring to his lips —and yet what else shall he utter that shall not have an air of direct insult to the common sense of mankind? What could any judge on any bench in the country do but laugh or swear at the attorney who should begin his defence of a petty-larceny client with an oration demonstrating *à priori* that no such thing as petty larceny ever had been, or in the nature of things, ever could be committed? And yet the attorney might make as sensible a speech as Outis—even a more sensible one—anything but a less sensible one. Indeed, *mutato nomine*, he might employ Outis's identical words. He might say—"In view, gentlemen of the jury, of all the glaring improbabilities of such a case, a prosecuting attorney should be very slow to make such a charge. I say glaring improbabilities, for it seems to me that no circumstantial evidence could be sufficient to secure a verdict of theft in such a case. Look *at* it. [Here the judge would look at the maker of the speech.] Look at it. A man who

aspires to (the) fame (of being a beau)—who seeks the esteem and praise of all the world (of dandies) and lives upon his reputation (for broadcloth) as his vital element, attemps to win his object—how? By stealing in open day the finest waistcoats, the most beautiful dress-coats (no others are worth stealing) and the rarest pantaloons of another, and claiming them as his own; and that too when he knows that every competitor for (the) fame (of Brummelism) and every fashion-plate Magazine in the world, as well as the real owner, will be ready to identify the borrowed plumes in a moment, and cry him down as a thief. A madman, an idiot, if he were capable of such an achievement, might do it, gentlemen of the jury, but no other."

Now, of course, no judge in the world whose sense of duty was not overruled by a stronger sense of the facetious, would permit the attorney to proceed with any such speech. It would never *do* to have the time of the court occupied by this gentleman's well-meant endeavor to show *à priori*, the impossibility of that ever happening which the clerk of this same court could show *à posteriori* had been happening by wholesale ever since there had been such a thing as a foreign count. And yet the speech of the attorney was really a very excellent speech, when we compare it with that of Outis. For the "glaring improbability" of the plagiarism, is a mere nothing by the side of the "glaring improbability" of the theft of the sky-blue dress-coat, and the yellow plaid pantaloons:—we may take it for granted, of course, that the thief was one of the upper ten thousand of thieves, and would not have put himself to the trouble of appropriating any garments that were not of indisputable *bon ton*,

and patronised even by Professor Longfellow himself. The improbability of the literary theft, I say, is really a mere trifle in comparison with the broad-cloth larceny. For the plagiarist is either a man of no note or a man of note. In the first case, he is usually an ignoramus, and getting possession of a rather rare book, plunders it without scruple, on the ground that nobody has ever seen a copy of it except himself. In the second case (which is a more general one by far) he pilfers from some poverty-stricken, and therefore neglected man of genius, on the reasonable supposition that this neglected man of genius will very soon cut his throat, or die of starvation, (the sooner the better, no doubt,) and that in the meantime he will be too busy in keeping the wolf from the door to look after the purloiners of his property—and too poor, and too cowed, and for these reasons too contemptible, under any circumstances, to dare accuse of so base a thing as theft, the wealthy and triumphant gentleman of elegant leisure who has only done the vagabond too much honor in knocking him down and robbing him upon the highway.

The plagiarist, then, in either case, has very reasonable ground for expecting impunity, and at all events it is because he thinks so, that he perpetrates the plagiarism—but how is it with the count who steps into the shop of the tailor, and slips under his cloak the sky-blue dress coat, and the yellow plaid pantaloons? He, the count, would be a greater fool in these matters than a count ever was, if he did not perceive at once, that the chances were about nine hundred and ninety-nine to one, that he would be caught the next morning before twelve o'clock, in the very first bloom and blush of his promenade down Broadway, by some one of those

officious individuals who are continually on the *qui vive* to catch the counts and take away from them their sky blue coats and yellow plaid pantaloons. Yes, undoubtedly; the count is very well aware of all this; but he takes into consideration, that although the nine hundred and ninety-nine chances *are* certainly against him, the one is just as certainly in his favor—that luck is everything—that life is short—that the weather is fine—and that if he can only manage to get safely through his promenade down Broadway in the sky-blue dress coat and the yellow plaid pantaloons, he will enjoy the high honor, for once in his life, at least, of being mistaken by fifteen ladies out of twenty, either for Professor Longfellow, or Phœbus Apollo. And this consideration is enough—the half of it would have been more than enough to satisfy the count that, in putting the garments under his cloak, he is doing a very sagacious and very commendable thing. He steals them, then, at once, and without scruple, and, when he is caught arrayed in them the next morning, he is, of course, highly amused to hear his counsel make an oration in court about the "glaring improbability" of his having stolen them when he stole them—by way of showing the abstract impossibility of their ever having been stolen at all.

"What is plagiarism?" demands Outis at the outset, *avec l'air d'un Romain qui sauve sa patrie*—"What is plagiarism, and what constitutes a good ground for the charge?" Of course all men anticipate something unusually happy in the way of reply to queries so cavernously propounded; but if so, then all men have forgotten, or no man has ever known that Outis is a Yankee. He answers the two questions by two others—and perhaps this is quite as much as any one should expect him to do.

"Did no two men," he says, "ever think alike without stealing one from the other?—or thinking alike, did no two men ever use the same or similar words to convey the thoughts, and that without any communication with each other?—To deny it is absurd." Of course it is—very absurd; and the only thing *more* absurd that I can call to mind at present, is the supposition that any person ever entertained an idea of denying it. But are we to understand the denying it, or the absurdity of denying it, or the absurdity of supposing that any person intended to deny it, as the true answer to the original queries.

But let me aid Outis to a distinct conception of his own irrelevance. I accuse his friend, specifically, of a plagiarism. This accusation Outis rebuts by asking me with a grave face—not whether the friend might not, in this individual case, and in the compass of eight short lines, have happened upon ten or twelve peculiar identities of thought and identities of expression with the author from whom I charge him with plagiarising—but simply whether I do not admit the *possibility* that once in the course of eternity some two individuals might not happen upon a single identity of thought, and give it voice in a single identity of expression.

Now, frankly, I admit the possibility in question, and would request my friends to get ready for me a strait-jacket if I did not. There can be no doubt in the world, for example, that Outis considers me a fool:—the thing is sufficiently plain: and this opinion on the part of Outis is what mankind have agreed to denominate an idea; and this idea is also entertained by Mr. Aldrich, and by Mr. Longfellow—and by Mrs. Outis and her seven children—and by Mrs. Aldrich and hers—and by

Mrs. Longfellow and hers—including the grandchildren and great grand-children, if any, who will be instructed to transmit the idea in unadulterated purity down an infinite vista of generations yet to come. And of this idea thus extensively entertained, it would really be a very difficult thing to vary the expression in any material degree. A remarkable similarity would be brought about, indeed, by the desire of the parties in question to put the thought into as compendious a form as possible, by way of bringing it to a focus at once and having done with it upon the spot.

Outis will perceive, therefore, that I have every desire in the world to afford him that "fair play" which he considers "a jewel," since I admit not only the possibility of the class of coincidences for which he contends, but even the impossibility of there not existing just as many of these coincidences as he may consider necessary to make out his case. One of the species he details as follows, at some length.

> Some years ago, a letter was written from some part of New England, describing one of those scenes, not very common during what is called "the January thaw," when the snow, mingled with rain, and freezing as it falls, forms a perfect covering of ice upon every object. The storm clears away suddenly, and the moon comes up. The letter proceeds—"*every tree and shrub, as far as the eye can reach, of pure transparent glass—a perfect garden of moving, waving, breathing crystals. . . . Every tree is a diamond chandelier, with a whole constellation of stars clustering to every socket,*" *&c.* This letter was laid away where such things usually are, in a private drawer, and did not see the light for many years. But the very next autumn brought out, among the splendid annuals got up in the country, a beautiful poem from Whittier, describing the same, or rather a similar scene, in which the line
>
> The trees, like crystal chandeliers,

was put in italics by every reviewer in the land, for the exceeding beauty of the imagery. Now *the letter* was written, probably, about the same time with the *poem*, though the poem was not published till nearly a year after. The writers were not, and never have been, acquainted with each other, and neither could possibly have seen the work of the other before writing. Now, was there any plagiarism here?"

After the fashion of Outis himself I shall answer his query by another. What has the question whether the chandelier friend committed a plagiarism, to do with the question whether the death-bed friend committed a plagiarism, or whether it is possible or impossible that plagiarism, generally, can be committed? But, merely for courtesy's sake, I step aside from the exact matter in hand. In the case mentioned I should consider material differences in the terms of description as more remarkable than coincidences. Since the tree *really* looked like a chandelier, the true wonder would have been in likening it to anything else. Of course, nine common-place men out of ten would have maintained it to be a chandelier-looking tree. No *poet* of any pretension however, would have committed himself so far as to put such a similitude in print. The chandelier might have been poetically likened to the crystallized tree—but the converse is a platitude. The gorgeous unaltered handiwork of Nature is always degraded by comparison with the tawdry gew-gaws of Art—and perhaps the very ugliest thing in the world is a chandelier. If "every reviewer in the land put the passage into Italics on account of the exceeding beauty of the imagery," then every printer's devil in the land should have been flogged for not taking it out of Italics upon the spot, and putting it in the plainest Roman—which is too good for it by one half.

I put no faith in the *nil admirari*, and am apt to be amazed at every second thing which I see. One of the most amazing things I have yet seen, is the complacency with which Outis throws to the right and left his anonymous assertions, taking it for granted that because he (Nobody) asserts them, I believe them as a matter of course. However—he is quite in the right. I am perfectly ready to admit anything that he pleases, and am prepared to put as implicit faith in his *ipse dixit* as the Bishop of Autun did in the Bible—on the ground that he knew nothing about it at all. We will understand it, then, not merely as an anonymous assertion but as an absolute fact, that the two chandelier authors "were not and never have been acquainted with each other, and that neither could have seen the work of the other before writing." We will agree to understand all this as indisputable truth, I say, through motives of the purest charity, for the purpose of assisting a friend out of trouble, and without reference to the consideration that no third person short of Signor Blitz or Professor Rogers could in any conceivable manner have satisfied himself of the truth of the twentieth part of it. Admitting this and everything else, to be as true as the pentateuch, it follows that plagiarism in the case in question was a thing that could not by any possibility be—and do I rightly comprehend Outis as demonstrating the impossibility of plagiarism where it *is* possible, by adducing instances of inevitable similarity under circumstances where it *is not?* The fact is, that through want of space and time to follow Outis through the labyrinth of impertinences in which he is scrambling about, I am constrained much against my sense of decorum, to place him in the high-road of his argument, so

he may see where he is, and what he is doing, and what it is that he is endeavoring to demonstrate.

He wishes to show, then, that Mr. Longfellow is innocent of the imitation with which I have charged him, and that Mr. Aldrich is innocent of the plagiarism with which I have *not* charged him; and this duplicate innocence is expected to be proved by showing the possibility that a certain, or that any uncertain series of coincidences may be the result of pure accident. Now of course I cannot be sure that Outis will regard my admission as a service or a disservice, but I admit the possibility at once; and not only this, but I would admit it as a possibility were the coincidences a billion, and each of the most definite peculiarity that human ingenuity could conceive. But in admitting this, I admit just nothing at all, so far as the advancement of Outis's proper argument is concerned. The affair is one of *probabilities* altogether, and can be satisfactorily settled only by reference to their Calculus.

"Pray," inquires Outis of Mr. Willis, "did you ever think the worse of Dana because your friend John Neal charged him with pirating upon Paul Allen, and Bryant, too, in his poem of THE DYING RAVEN?" I am sincerely disposed to give Outis his due, and will not pretend to deny his happy facility in asking irrelevant questions. In the present case, we can only imagine Mr. Willis's reply:—"My dear sir," he might say, "I certainly do not think much the worse of Mr. Dana, because Mr. Neal *charged* him with the piracy, but be so kind as not to inquire what might have been my opinion had there been any substantiation of the charge." I quote Outis's inquiry, however, not so much to insist upon its singular luminousness, as to call attention to the ar-

gument embodied in the capital letters of "THE DYING RAVEN."

Now, were I, in any spasm of perversity, to direct Outis's catechetical artillery against himself, and demand of him explicitly *his reasons* for causing those three words to be printed in capitals, what in the world would he do for a reply? As a matter of course, for some moments, he would be profoundly embarrassed—but, being a true man, and a chivalrous one, as all defenders of Mr. Longfellow must be, he could not fail, in the end, to admit that they were so printed for the purpose of safely insinuating a charge which not even an Outis had the impudence openly to utter. Let us imagine his thoughts while carefully twice underscoring the words. Is it impossible that they ran thus?—"I am perfectly well aware, to be sure, that the only conceivable resemblance between Mr. Bryant's poem and Mr. Poe's poem, lies in their common reference to a raven; but then, what I am writing will be seen by some who have not read Mr. Bryant's poem, and by many who have never heard of Mr. Poe's, and among these classes I shall be able to do Mr. Poe a serious injustice and injury, by conveying the idea that there is really sufficient similarity to warrant that charge of plagiarism, which I, Outis, the 'acquaintance of Mr. Longfellow,' am too high-minded and too merciful to prefer."

Now, I do not pretend to be positive that any such thoughts as these ever entered the brain of Outis. Nor will I venture to designate the whole insinuation as a specimen of "carping littleness, too paltry for any man who values his reputation as a gentleman"; for, in the first place, the whole matter, as I have put it, is purely suppositious, and in the second, I should furnish ground for a new insinua-

tion of the same character, inasmuch as I should be employing Outis's identical words. The fact is, Outis has happened upon the idea that the most direct method of rebutting one accusation, is to get up another. By showing that *I* have committed a sin, he proposes to show that Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Longfellow have *not*. Leaving the underscored DYING RAVEN to argue its own case, he proceeds, therefore, as follows:—

> Who, for example, would wish to be guilty of the littleness of detracting from the uncommon merit of that remarkable poem of this same Mr. Poe's, recently published in the Mirror, from the American Review, entitled "THE RAVEN," by charging *him* with the paltriness of imitation? And yet, some snarling critic, who might envy the reputation he had not the genius to secure for himself, might refer to the frequent, very forcible, but rather quaint repetition, in the last two lines of many of the stanzas, as a palpable imitation of the manner of Coleridge, in several stanzas of the *Ancient Mariner*. Let me put them together. Mr. Poe says—
>
> Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore,
> Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore.
>
> And again—
>
> It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.
>
> Mr. Coleridge says, (running two lines into one):
>
> For all averred I had killed the bird that made the breeze to blow,
> "Ah, wretch!" said they, "the bird to slay, that made the breeze to blow.
>
> And again—
>
> They all averred I had killed the bird, that brought the fog and mist,
> "'Twas right," said they, "such birds to slay, that bring the fog and mist."

The "rather quaint" is ingenious. Fully one-third of whatever effect "The Raven" has, is wrought by the quaintness in question—a point elaborately in-

troduced, to accomplish a well-considered purpose. What idea would Outis entertain of me, were I to speak of his defence of his friends as very decent, very respectable, but rather meritorious? In the passages collated, there are two points upon which the "snarling critic" might base his insinuation—if ever so weak a "snarling critic" existed. Of these two points one is purely hypothetical—that is to say, it is disingenuously manufactured by Mr. Longfellow's acquaintance to suit his own purposes—or perhaps the purposes of the imaginary snarling critic. The argument of the second point is demolished by my not only admitting it, but insisting upon it. Perhaps the least tedious mode of refuting Outis, is to acknowledge nine-tenths of everything he may think proper to say.

But, in the present instance, what am I called upon to acknowledge? I am charged with imitating the repetition of phrase in the two concluding lines of a stanza, and of imitating this from Coleridge. But why not extend the accusation, and insinuate that I imitate it from everybody else? for certainly there is no poet living or dead who has not put in practice the identical effect—the well-understood effect of the *refrain*. Is Outis's argument to the end that *I* have no right to this thing for the reason that all the world has? If this is *not* his argument, will he be kind enough to inform me (at his leisure) what it *is?* Or is he prepared to confess himself so absurdly uninformed as not to know that whatever a poet claims on the score of original versification, is claimed not on account of any individual rhythmical or metrical effects, (for *none* are individually original,) but solely on account of the novelty of his *combinations* of old effects? The hypothesis, or manufacture, consists in the alteration of Cole-

ridge's metre, with the view of forcing it into a merely ocular similarity with my own, and thus of imposing upon some one or two grossly ignorant readers. I give the verses of Coleridge as they *are:*

> For all averred, I had killed the bird
> That made the breeze to blow,
> Ah, wretch, said they, the bird to slay,
> That made the breeze to blow.

The verses beginning, "*They* all averred," etc., are arranged in the same manner. Now I have taken it for granted that it is Outis's design to impose the idea of similarity between my lines and those of Coleridge, upon some one or two grossly ignorant individuals: at the same time, whoever attempts such an imposition is rendered liable at least to the suspicion of very gross ignorance himself. The ignorance or the knavery are the two uncomfortable horns of his dilemma.

Let us see. Coleridge's lines are arranged in quatrains—mine in couplets. His first and third lines rhyme at the close of the second and fourth feet—mine flow continuously, without rhyme. His metre, briefly defined, is alternately tetrameter acatalectic and trimeter acatalectic—mine is uniformly octameter catalectic. It might be expected, however, that at least the *rhythm* would prove to be identical—but not so. Coleridge's is iambic (varied in the third foot of the first line with an anapæst) —mine is the exact converse, trochaic. The fact is, that neither in rhythm, metre, stanza, or rhyme, is there even a *single* point of *approximation* throughout; the *only* similarity being the wickedly or sillily manufactured one of Outis himself, appealing from the ears to the eyes of the most uncultivated classes of the rabble. The ingenuity and validity of the

manufacture might be approached, although certainly not paralleled, by an attempt to show that blue and yellow pigments standing unmixed at separate ends of a studio, were equivalent to green. I say "not paralleled," for even the *mixing* of the pigments, in the case of Outis, would be very far, as I have shown, from producing the supposititious effect. Coleridge's lines, written together, would result in rhymed iambic heptameter acatalectic, while mine are unrhymed trochaic octameter catalectic—differing in every conceivable circumstance. A closer parallel than the one I have imagined, would be the demonstration that two are equal to four, on the ground that, possessing two dollars, a man will have four when he gets an additional couple—for that the additional couple is *somewhere*, no one, after due consideration, will deny.

If Outis will now take a seat upon one of the horns of his dilemma, I will proceed to the third variation of the charges *insinuated* through the medium of the "snarling critic," in the passage heretofore quoted.*

The first point to be attended to is the "ten to one that I never saw it before." Ten to one that I never did—but Outis might have remembered that twenty to one I should *like* to see it. In accusing either Mr. Aldrich or Mr. Hood, I printed their poems together and in full. But an *anonymous* gentleman rebuts my accusation by telling me that there is a certain similarity between a poem of my own and an *anonymous* poem which he has before *him*, and which he would like to transcribe if it were not too long. He contents himself, therefore, with giving me, from this too long poem, three stanzas

* "I have before me," to "part of such comparison," *ante*, p. 116.

which are shown, by a series of intervening asterisks, to have been *culled*, to suit his own purposes, from different portions of the poem, but which (again to suit his own purposes) he places before the public in consecutive connexion! The least that can be said of the whole statement is that it is deliciously frank—but, upon the whole, the poem will look quite as well before *me*, as before Outis, whose time is too much occupied to transcribe it. I, on the other hand, am entirely at leisure, and will transcribe and *print* the whole of it with the greatest pleasure in the world—provided always that it is not too long to refer to—too long to have its whereabouts pointed out—as I half suspect, from Outis's silence on the subject, that *it is*. One thing I will take it upon myself to say, in the spirit of prophecy:—whether the poem in question is or is not in existence (and we have only Nobody's word that it is,) the passages *as quoted*, are not in existence, except as quoted by Outis, who, in some particulars, I maintain, has falsified the text, for the purpose of *forcing* a similarity, as in the case of the verses of Coleridge. All this I assert in the spirit of prophecy, while we await the forthcoming of the poem. In the meantime, we will estimate the "identities" with reference to the "Raven" as collated with the passages culled by Outis—granting him everything he is weak enough to imagine I am in duty bound to grant—admitting that the poem as a whole exists—that the words and lines are ingenuously written—that the stanzas have the connexion and sequence he gives them—and that although he has been already found guilty of chicanery in one instance, he is at least entirely innocent in this.

He has established, he says, fifteen identities, "and that, too, without a word of rhythm, metre,

or stanza, which should never form a part of such comparison"—by which, of course, we are to understand that *with* the rhythm, metre, and stanza (omitted only because they should never form a part of such comparison) he would have succeeded in establishing eighteen. Now I insist that rhythm, metre, and stanza, *should* form and *must* form a part of the comparison, and I will presently demonstrate what I say. I also insist, therefore, since he *could* find me guilty if he *would* upon these points, that guilty he *must* and *shall* find me upon the spot. He then, distinctly, has established eighteen identities—and I proceed to examine them one by one.

"*First*," he says "in each case the poet is a broken-hearted lover." Not so:—*my* poet has no indication of a broken heart. On the contrary he lives triumphantly in the expectation of meeting his Lenore in Aidenn, and is so indignant with the raven for maintaining that the meeting will never take place, as to call him a liar, and order him out of the house. Not only is my lover not a broken-hearted one—but I have been at some pains to show that broken hearts and matters of that kind are improperly made the subject of poems. I refer to a chapter of the articles entitled "Marginalia," (p.—). "*Second*," says Outis, "that lover longs for some hereafter communion with the bird." In my poem there is no expression of any such longing—the nearest approach to it is the triumphant consciousness which forms the thesis and staple of the whole. In Outis's poem the nearest approach to the "longing" is contained in the lover's request to the bird to repeat a strain that assures him (the lover,) that it (the bird,) has known the lost mistress. "*Third* —there is a bird," says Outis. So there is. Mine however is a raven, and we may take it for granted

that Outis's is either a nightingale or a cockatoo. "*Fourth*, the bird is at the poet's window." As regards my poem, true; as regards Outis's, not:—the poet only *requests* the bird to come to the window. *Fifth*, the bird being at the poet's window, makes a noise." The fourth specification failing, the fifth, which depends upon it, as a matter of course fails too. "*Sixth*, making a noise attracts the attention of the poet." The fifth specification failing, the sixth, which depends upon it, fails, likewise, and as a matter of course, as before. "*Seventh*, [the poet] was half asleep, dozing, dreaming." False altogether: only *my* poet was "napping," and this in the commencement of the poem, which is occupied with realities and waking action. Outis's poet is fast asleep and dreams everything. "*Eighth*, the poet invites the bird to come in." Another palpable failure. Outis's poet indeed asked his bird in; but my raven walked in without any invitation. "*Ninth*—a confabulation ensues." As regards my poem, true; but there is not a word of any confabulation in Outis's. "*Tenth*—the bird is supposed to be a visitor from the land of spirits." As regards Outis's poem, this is true only if we give a wide interpretation to the phrase "realms of light." In my poem the bird is not only not from the world of spirits, but I have specifically conveyed the idea of his having escaped from "some unhappy master," of whom he had caught the word "nevermore"—in the concluding stanza, it is true, I suddenly convert him into an allegorical emblem or personification of Mournful Remembrance, out of the shadow of which the poet is "lifted nevermore." "*Eleventh*—allusion is made to the departed." Admitted. "*Twelfth*—intimation is given that the bird knew something of the departed." True as regards

Outis's poem only. No such intimation is given in mine. "*Thirteenth*—that he knew her worth and loveliness." Again—true only as regards Outis's poem. It should be observed here that I have disproved the twelfth and thirteenth specifications purely for form's sake:—they are nothing more than disingenuous repetitions of the eleventh. The "allusion to the departed" *is* the "intimation," and the intimation *is* that "he knew her worth and loveliness." "*Fourteenth*—the bird seems willing to linger with the poet." True only as regards my poem—in Outis's (as quoted) there is nothing of the kind. "*Fifteenth*—there is a repetition, in the second and fourth lines, of a part, and that the emphatic part, of the first and third." What is here asserted is true only of the first stanza quoted by Outis, and of the commencement of the third. There is nothing of it in the second. In my poem there is nothing of it at all, with the exception of the repetition in the refrain, occurring at the *fifth* line of my stanza of six. I quote a stanza—by way of rendering everything perfectly intelligible, and affording Outis his much coveted "fair play:"

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

Sixteenth—concerns the rhythm. Outis's is iambic —mine the exact converse, trochaic. *Seventeenth*—

regards the metre. Outis's is hexameter, alternating with pentameter, both acatalectic.* Mine is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. *Eighteenth* and last has respect to the stanza—that is to say, to the general arrangement of the metre into masses. Of Outis's I need only say that it is a very common and certainly a very stupid one. My own has at least the merit of *being* my own. No writer, living or dead, has ever employed anything resembling it. The innumerable specific differences between it and that of Outis it would be a tedious matter to point out—but a far less difficult matter than to designate one individual point of similarity.

And now what are we to think of the eighteen identities of Outis—the fifteen that he establishes and the three that he could establish if he would—that is to say, if he could only bring himself to be so unmerciful? Of the whole eighteen, sixteen have shown themselves to be lamentable failures—having no more substantial basis than sheer misrepresentation, "too paltry for any man who values his reputation as a gentleman and a scholar," and depending altogether for effect upon the *chances* that nobody would take the trouble to investigate their falsehood or their truth. Two—the third and the eleventh—are sustained: and these two show that in both poems there is "an allusion to the departed,"

*This is as accurate a description as can be given of the alternating (of the second and fourth) lines in a few words. The fact is, they are indescribable without more trouble than they are worth—and seem to me either to have been written by some one ignorant of the principles of verse, or to be misquoted. The line, however,

That tells me thou hast seen and loved my Clare,

answers the description I have given of the alternating verses, and was, no doubt, the general *intention* for all of them.

and that in both poems there is "a bird." The first idea that suggests itself, at this point, is, whether *not* to have a bird and *not* to have an allusion to a deceased mistress, would not be the truer features of distinctiveness after all—whether two poems which have *not* these items might not be more rationally charged with similarity than any two poems which *have*. But having thus disproved *all* the identities of Outis, (for any one comprehending the principle of proof in such cases will admit that two *only*, are in effect just nothing at all,) I am quite ready, by way again of affording him "fair play," to expunge every thing that has been said on the subject, and proceed as if every one of these eighteen identities was in the first bloom and deepest blush of a demonstration.

I might grant them as demonstrated, to be sure, on the ground which I have already touched—that to prove me or any body else an imitator, is no mode of showing that Mr. Aldrich or Mr. Longfellow is *not*. But I might safely admit them on another and equally substantial consideration, which seems to have been overlooked by the zeal of Outis altogether. He has clearly forgotten that the *mere* number of such coincidences proves nothing, because at any moment we can oblige it to prove too much. It is the easiest thing imaginable to suggest—and even to do that which Outis has failed in doing—to demonstrate a practically infinite series of identities between any two compositions in the world—but it by no means follows that all compositions in the world have a *similarity* one with the other, in any comprehensible sense of the term. I mean to say that regard must be had not *only* to the number of the coincidences, but to the peculiarity of each—this peculiarity growing less and less necessary,

and the effect of number more and more important, in a ratio prodigiously accumulative, as the investigation progresses. And again—regard must be had not only to the number *and* peculiarity of the coincidences, but to the antagonistic differences, if any, which surround them—and very especially to *the space* over which the coincidences are spread, and the number of paucity of the events, or incidents, from among which the coincidences are selected. When Outis, for example, picks out his eighteen coincidences (which I am now granting as sustained) from a poem so long as The Raven, in collation with a poem not forthcoming, and which may, therefore, for anything anybody knows to the contrary, be as long as an infinite flock of ravens, he is merely putting himself to unnecessary trouble in getting together phantoms of arguments that can have no substance wherewith to aid his demonstration, until the ascertained extent of the unknown poem from which they are culled, affords them a purpose and a palpability. Can any man doubt that between The Iliad and the Paradise Lost there might be established even a thousand very idiosyncratic identities?—and yet is any man fool enough to maintain that the Iliad is the only original of the Paradise Lost?

But how is it in the case of Messieurs Aldrich and Hood? The poems here are both remarkably brief —and as I have every intention to do justice, and no other intention in the world, I shall be pardoned for again directing attention to them. (See page 111.)

Let it be understood that I am entirely uninformed as to which of these two poems was first published. And so little has the question of priority to do with my thesis, that I shall not put myself to the trouble of inquiring. What I maintain is, that there are

sufficient grounds for belief that the one is the plagiarised from the other:—*who* is the original, and *who* is the plagiarist, are points I leave to be settled by any one who thinks the matter of sufficient consequence to give it his attention. But the man who shall deny the plagiarism abstractly—what is it that he calls upon us to believe? *First*—that two poets, in remote parts of the world, conceived the idea of composing a poem on the subject of *Death*. Of course, there is nothing remarkable in this. Death is a naturally poetic theme, and suggests itself by a seeming spontaneity to every poet in the world. But had the subject chosen by the two widely separated poets, been even strikingly peculiar—had it been, for example, *a porcupine*, *a piece of gingerbread*, or anything unlikely to be made the subject of a poem, still no sensible person would have insisted upon the single coincidence as any thing *beyond* a single coincidence. We have no difficulty, therefore, in believing what, so far, we are called upon to believe. *Secondly*, we must credit that the two poets concluded to write not only on death, but on the death of a *woman*. Here the mind, observing the two identities, reverts to their peculiarity or non-peculiarity, and finding *no* peculiarity—admitting that the death of a woman is a naturally suggested poetic subject—has no difficulty also in admitting the two coincidences—as such, and nothing beyond. *Thirdly*, we are called upon to believe that the two poets not only concluded to write upon death, and upon the death of a woman, but that, from the innumerable phases of death, the phase of *tranquillity* was happened upon by each. Here the intellect commences a slight rebellion, but it is quieted by the admission, partly, of the spontaneity with which such an idea

might arise, and partly of the *possibility* of the coincidences, independently of the consideration of spontaneity. *Fourthly*, we are required to believe that the two poets happened not only upon death—the death of a woman—and the tranquil death of a woman—but upon the idea of representing this woman as lying tranquilly *throughout the whole night*, in spite of the infinity of different durations which might have been imagined for her trance of tranquillity. At this point the reason perceives the evidence against these coincidences, (as such and nothing more,) to be increasing in geometrical ratio. It discards all idea of spontaneity, and if it yield credence at all, yields it altogether on the ground of the indisputable *possibility*. *Fifthly*—we are requested to believe that our poets happened not only upon *death*—upon the death of a *woman*—upon the *tranquil* death of a woman—and upon the lying of this woman tranquilly *throughout the night*—but, also, upon the idea of selecting, from the innumerable phases which characterize a tranquil death-bed, the identical one of soft *breathing*—employing also the identical word. Here the reason gives up the endeavor to believe that one poem has not been suggested by the other:—if it be a reason accustomed to deal with the mathematical Calculus of Probabilities, it has abandoned this endeavor at the preceding stage of the investigation. The evidence of suggestion has now become prodigiously accumulate. Each succeeding coincidence (however slight) is proof not merely added, but multiplied by hundreds of thousands. *Sixthly*, we are called upon to believe, not only that the two poets happened upon all this, together with the idea of the soft breathing, but also of employing the identical word *breathing*, in the same line with the

identical word, *night*. This proposition the reason receives with a smile. *Seventhly*, however, we are required to admit, not only all that has been already found inadmissible, but in addition, that the two poets conceived the idea of representing the death of a woman as occurring precisely at the same instant, out of all the infinite instants of all time. This proposition the reason receives only with a sneer. *Eighthly*, we are called upon to acquiesce in the assertion, that not only all these improbabilities are probable, but that in addition again, the two poets happened upon the idea of representing the woman as stepping immediately into Paradise:—and, *ninthly*, that both should not only happen upon all this, but upon the idea of writing a peculiarly brief poem, on so admirably suggestive a thesis:—and, *tenthly*, that out of the various rhythms, that is to say, variations of poetic feet, they should have both happened upon the iambus:—and, *eleventhly*, that out of the absolutely infinite metres that may be contrived from this rhythm, they should both have hit upon the tetrameter acatalectic for the first and third lines of a stanza:—and, *twelfthly*, upon the trimeter acatalectic for the second and fourth; and, *thirteenthly*, upon an absolute identity of phrase at, *fourteenthly*, an obsolutely identical position, viz.: upon the phrases, "But when the morn," &c., and, "But when the sun," &c., occurring in the beginning of the first line in the last stanza of each poem:—and, *fifteenthly* and lastly, that out of the vast multitude of appropriate *titles*, they should both have happened upon one whose identity is interfered with at all, only by the difference between the definite and indefinite article.

Now the chances that these fifteen coincidences, so peculiar in character, and all occurring within

the compass of eight short lines, on the one part, and sixteen on the other—the chances, I say, that these coincidences are merely accidental, may be estimated, possibly, as about one to one hundred millions; and any man who reasons at all, is of course grossly insulted in being called upon to credit them as accidental.

"I have written what I have written," says Outis, "from no personal motives, but simply because, from my earliest reading of reviews and critical notices, I have been disgusted with this wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason." I have already agreed to believe implicitly everything asserted by the anonymous Outis, and am fully prepared to admit, even, his own contradictions, in one sentence, of what he has insisted upon in the sentence preceding. I shall assume it is indisputable, then, (since Nobody says it) that first, he has no acquaintance with myself and "some acquaintance with Mr. Longfellow," and secondly, that he has "written what he has written from no personal motives whatever." That he has been disgusted with "the mangling of victims without rhyme or reason," is, to be sure, a little unaccountable, for the victims without rhyme or reason are precisely the victims that ought to be mangled; but that he has been disgusted "from his earliest reading" with critical notices and reviews, is credible enough if we but imagine his "earliest reading" and earliest writing to have taken place about the same epoch of time.

But to be serious; if Outis has his own private reasons for being disgusted with what he terms the "wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason," there is not a man living, of common sense and common honesty, who has not better reason

(if possible) to be disgusted with the insufferable cant and shameless misrepresentation practised habitually by just such persons as Outis, with the view of decrying by sheer strength of lungs—of trampling down—of rioting down—of mobbing down any man with a soul that bids him come out from among the general corruption of our public press, and take his stand upon the open ground of rectitude and honor. The Outises who practice this species of bullyism are, as a matter of course, anonymous. They are either the "victims without rhyme or reason who have been mangled by wholesale," or they are the relatives, or the relatives *of* the relatives of the "victims without rhyme or reason who have been mangled by wholesale." Their watchwords are "carping littleness," "envious malignity," and "personal abuse." Their low artifices are insinuated calumnies, and indefatigable whispers of regret, from post to pillar, that "Mr. So-and-So, or Mr. This-and-That *will* persist in rendering himself so dreadfully unpopular"—no one, in the meantime, being more thoroughly and painfully aware than these very Outises, that the unpopularity of the just critic who reasons his way, guiltless of dogmatism, is confined altogether within the limits of the influence of the victims without rhyme and reason who have been mangled by wholesale. Even the manifest injustice of a Gifford is, I grieve to say, an exceedingly popular thing; and there is *no* literary element of popularity more absolutely and more universally effective than the pungent impartiality of a Wilson or a Macaulay. In regard to my own course—without daring to arrogate to myself a single other quality of either of these eminent men than that pure contempt for mere prejudice and conventionality which

actuated them all, I will now unscrupulously call the attention of the Outises to the fact, that it was during what they (the Outises) would insinuate to be the unpopularity of my "wholesale mangling of the victims without rhyme and reason" that, in one year, the circulation of the "Southern Messenger" (a five-dollar journal) extended itself from seven hundred to nearly five thousand,—and that, in little more than twice the same time, "Graham's Magazine" swelled its list from five to fifty-two thousand subscribers.

I make no apology for these egotisms, and I proceed with them without hesitation—for, in myself, I am but defending a set of principles which no honest man need be ashamed of defending, and for whose defence no honest man will consider an apology required. The usual watchwords of the Outises, when repelling a criticism,—their customary charges, overt or insinuated, are (as I have already said) those of "personal abuse" and "wholesale (or indiscriminate) mangling." In the present instance the latter solely is employed—for not even an Outis can accuse me, with even a decent show of verisimilitude, of having ever descended, in the most condemnatory of my reviews, to that personal abuse which, upon one or two occasions, has indeed been levelled at myself, in the spasmodic endeavors of aggrieved authors to rebut what I have ventured to demonstrate. I have then to refute only the accusation of mangling by wholesale—and I refute it by the simplest reference to *fact*. What I have written remains; and is readily accessible in any of our public libraries. I have had one or two impotent enemies, and a multitude of cherished friends—and both friends and enemies have been, for the most part, literary people; yet no man can

point to a single *critique*, among the very numerous ones which I have written during the last ten years, which is either wholly fault-finding or wholly in approbation; nor is there an instance to be discovered, among all that I have published, of my having set forth, either in praise or censure, a single opinion upon any critical topic of moment, without attempting, at least, to give it authority by something that wore the semblance of a reason. Now, is there a writer in the land, who, having dealt in criticism even one-fourth as much as myself, can of his own criticisms, conscientiously say the same? The fact is, that very many of the most eminent men in America whom I am proud to number among the sincerest of my friends, have been rendered so solely by their approbation of my comments upon their own works—comments in great measure directed *against* themselves as authors—belonging altogether to that very class of criticism which it is the petty policy of the Outises to cry down, with their diminutive voices, as offensive on the score of wholesale vituperation and personal abuse. If, to be brief, in what I have put forth there has been a preponderance of censure over commendation,—is there not to be imagined for this preponderance a more charitable motive than any which the Outises have been magnanimous enough to assign me—is not this preponderance, in a word, the natural and inevitable tendency of all criticism worth the name in this age of so universal an authorship, that no man in his senses will pretend to deny the vast predominance of good writers over bad?

And now, says Outis, for the matter of Longfellow's imitations—in what do they consist?—The critic is not very specific in this charge. Of what kind are they? Are they imitations of thought? Why not call them plagia-

risms then, and show them up? Or are they only verbal imitations of style? Perhaps *this* is one of them, in his poem on the "*Sea Weed*,"

> ———*drifting, drifting, drifting,*
> On the shifting
> Currents of the restless main.

resembling in form and collocation only, a line in a beautiful and very powerful poem of MR. EDGAR A. POE. (Write it rather EDGAR, a *Poet*, and then it is right to a T.) I have not the poem before me, and have forgotten its title. But he is describing a magnificent intellect in ruins, if I remember rightly—and, speaking of the eloquence of its better days, represents it as

> ———*flowing, flowing, flowing,*
> Like a river.

Is this what the critic means? Is it *such* imitations as this that he alludes to? If not, I am at fault, either in my reading of Longfellow, or in my general familiarity with the American Poets. If this *be* the kind of imitation referred to, permit me to say, the charge is too paltry for any man, who valued his reputation either as a gentleman or a scholar.

Elsewhere he says:—

Moreover, this poem contains an example of that kind of repetition which I have supposed the critic meant to charge upon Longfellow as one of his imitations—

Away—Away—away— &c.

I might pursue it farther, but I will not. Such criticisms only make the author of them contemptible, without soiling a plume in the cap of his victim.

The first point to be here observed is the complacency with which Outis *supposes* me to make a certain charge and then vituperates me for his own absurd supposition. Were I, or any man, to accuse Mr. Longfellow of imitation on the score of thrice employing a word in consecutive con-

nexion, then I (or any man) would only be guilty of as great a sotticism as was Outis in accusing *me* of imitation on the score of the *refrain*. The repetition in question is assuredly not claimed by myself as original—I should therefore be wary how I charged Mr. Longfellow with imitating it from myself. It is, in fact, a musical effect, which is the common property of all mankind, and has been their common property for ages. Nevertheless the quotation of this

——drifting, drifting, drifting,

is, on the part of Outis, a little unfortunate. Most certainly the supposed imitation had never been observed by me—nor even had I observed it, should I have considered it *individually*, as a point of any moment;—but all will admit, (since Outis himself has noticed the parallel,) that, were a second parallel of any obviousness to be established from the same brief poem, "The Sea-Weed," this second would come in very strong corroboration of the first. Now, the sixth stanza of this very "Sea-Weed" (which was first published in "Graham's Magazine" for January, 1845) commences with

From the far off isles enchanted;

and in a little poem of my own, addressed "To Mary," and first published at page 636 of the first volume of the "Southern Literary Messenger," will be found the lines:

> And thus thy memory is to me
> *Like some enchanted far off isle*
> In some tumultuous sea.

But to show, in general, what I mean by accusing Mr. Longfellow of imitation, I collate his "Midnight

Mass for the Dying Year" with "The Death of the Old Year" of Tennyson.

MIDNIGHT MASS FOR THE DYING YEAR

Yes, the Year is growing old,
And his eye is pale and bleared,
Death, with frosty hand and cold,
Plucks the old man by the beard,
Sorely,—sorely!

The leaves are falling, falling
Solemnly and slow;
Caw, caw, the rooks are calling;
It is a sound of wo,
A sound of wo!

Through woods and mountain-passes
The winds, like anthems, roll;
They are chanting solemn masses,
Singing, Pray for this poor soul,
Pray,—pray

And the hooded clouds, like friars,
Tell their beads in drops of rain,
And patter their doleful prayers;
But their prayers are all in vain,
All in vain!

There he stands in the foul weather,
The foolish, fond Old Year,
Crowned with wild flowers and with heather
Like weak, despised Lear,
A king,—a king!

Then comes the summer-like day,
Bids the old man rejoice!
His joy! his last! O, the old man gray,
Loveth her ever soft voice
Gentle and low.

made, in general, no advances; and Sculpture, properly considered, is perhaps the *most* imitative of all arts which have a right to the title of Art at all. Looking next at Painting, we find that we have to boast of progress only in the ratio of the inferior imitativeness of Painting, when compared with Sculpture. As far indeed as we have any means of judging, our improvement has been exceedingly little, and did we know anything of ancient Art, in this department, we might be astonished at discovering that we had advanced even far less than we suppose. As regards Architecture, whatever progress we have made, has been precisely in those particulars which have no reference to imitation:—that is to say we have improved the utilitarian and not the ornamental provinces of the art. Where Reason predominated, we advanced; where mere Feeling or Taste was the guide, we remained as we were.

Coming to the Drama, we shall see that in its mechanisms we have made progress, while in its spirituality we have done little or nothing for centuries certainly—and, perhaps, little or nothing for thousands of years. And this is because what we term the spirituality of the drama is precisely its imitative portion—is exactly that portion which distinguishes it as one of the principal of the imitative arts.

Sculptors, painters, dramatists, are, from the very nature of their material,—their spiritual material—imitators—conservatists—prone to repose in old Feeling and in antique Taste. For this reason—and for this reason only—the arts of Sculpture, Painting and the Drama have not advanced—or have advanced feebly, and inversely in the ratio of their imitativeness.

But it by no means follows that either has *declined*. All *seem* to have declined, because they have remained stationary while the multitudinous other arts (of reason) have flitted so rapidly by them. In the same manner the traveller by railroad can imagine that the trees by the wayside are retrograding. The trees in this case are absolutely stationary—but the Drama has not been altogether so, although its progress has been so slight as not to interfere with the general effect—that of seeming retrogradation or decline.

This seeming retrogradation, however, is to all practical intents an absolute one. Whether the drama has declined, or whether it has merely remained stationary, is a point of no importance, so far as concerns the public encouragement of the drama. It is unsupported, in either case, because it does not deserve support.

But if this stagnation, or deterioration, grows out of the very idiosyncrasy of the drama itself, as one of the principal of the imitative arts, how is it possible that a remedy shall be applied—since it is clearly impossible to alter the nature of the art, and yet leave it the art which it now is?

We have already spoken of the improvements effected in Architecture, in all its utilitarian departments, and in the Drama, at all the points of its mechanism. "Wherever Reason predominates we advance; where mere Feeling or Taste is the guide, we remain as we are." We wish now to suggest that, by the engrafting of Reason upon Feeling and Taste, we shall be able, and thus alone shall be able, to force the modern drama into the production of any profitable fruit.

At present, what is it we do? We are content if, with Feeling and Taste, a dramatist does *as other*

dramatists have done. The most successful of the more immediately modern playwrights has been Sheridan Knowles, and to play Sheridan Knowles seems to be the highest ambition of our writers for the stage. Now the author of "The Hunchback," possesses what we are weak enough to term the true "dramatic feeling," and this true dramatic feeling he has manifested in the most preposterous series of imitations of the Elizabethan drama, by which ever mankind were insulted and beguiled. Not only did he adhere to the old plots, the old characters, the old stage conventionalities throughout; but, he went even so far as to persist in the obsolete phraseologies of the Elizabethan period—and just in proportion to his obstinacy and absurdity at all points, did we pretend to like him the better, and pretend to consider him a great dramatist.

Pretend—for every particle of it was pretence. Never was enthusiasm more utterly false than that which so many "respectable audiences" endeavored to get up for these plays—endeavored to get up, first, because there was a general desire to see the drama revive, and secondly, because we had been all along entertaining the fancy that "the decline of the drama" meant little, if any thing, else than its deviation from the Elizabethan routine—and that, consequently, the return of the Elizabethan routine was, and of necessity must be, the revival of the drama.

But if the principles we have been at some trouble in explaining, are true—and most profoundly do we feel them to be so—if the spirit of imitation is, in fact, the real source of drama's stagnation—and if it is so because of the tendency in all imitation to render Reason subservient to Feeling and to Taste—it is clear that only by deliberate counter-

acting of the spirit, and of the tendency of the spirit, we can hope to succeed in the drama's revival.

The first thing necessary is to burn or bury the "old models," and to forget, as quickly as possible, that ever a play has been penned. The second thing is to consider *de novo* what are the *capabilities* of the drama—not merely what hitherto have been its conventional purposes. The third and last point has reference to the composition of a play (showing to the fullest extent these capabilities) conceived and constructed with Feeling and with Taste, but with Feeling and Taste guided and controlled in every particular by the details of Reason—of Common Sense—in a word, of a Natural Art.

It is obvious, in the meantime, that towards the good end in view, much may be effected by discriminative criticism on what has already been done. The field, thus stated, is of course, practically illimitable—and to Americans the American drama is the special point of interest. We propose, therefore, in a series of papers, to take a somewhat deliberate survey of some few of the most noticeable American plays. We shall do this without reference either to the date of the composition, or its adaptation for the closet or the stage. We shall speak with absolute frankness both of merits and defects—our principal object being understood not as that of mere commentary on the individual play—but on the drama in general, and on the American drama in especial, of which each individual play is a constituent part. We will commence at once with

TORTESA, THE USURER

This is the third dramatic attempt of Mr. Willis, and may be regarded as particularly successful.

since it has received, both on the stage and in the closet, no stinted measure of commendation. This success, as well as the high reputation of the author, will justify us in a more extended notice of the play than might, under other circumstances, be desirable.

The story runs thus:—Tortesa, an usurer of Florence, and whose character is a mingled web of good and evil feelings, gets into his possession the palace and lands of a certain Count Falcone. The usurer would wed the daughter (Isabella) of Falcone not through love, but, in his own words,

> To please a devil that inhabits him—

in fact, to mortify the pride of the nobility, and avenge himself of their scorn. He therefore bargains with Falcone [a narrow-souled villain] for the hand of Isabella. The deed of the Falcone property is restored to the Count, upon an agreement that the lady shall marry the usurer—this contract being invalid should Falcone change his mind in regard to the marriage, or should the maiden demur—but valid should the wedding be prevented through any fault of Tortesa, or through any accident not springing from the will of the father or child. The first scene makes us aware of this bargain, and introduces to us Zippa, a glover's daughter, who resolves, with a view of befriending Isabella, to feign a love for Tortesa, [which, in fact, she partially feels,] hoping thus to break off the match.

The second scene makes us acquainted with a young painter, (Angelo,) poor, but of high talents and ambition, and with his servant, (Tomaso,) an old bottle-loving rascal, entertaining no very exalted opinion of his master's abilities. Tomaso does some injury to a picture, and Angelo is about to run him through the body, when he is interrupted

by a sudden visit from the Duke of Florence, attended by Falcone. The Duke is enraged at the murderous attempt, but admires the paintings in the studio. Finding that the rage of the great man will prevent his patronage if he knows the aggressor as the artist, Angelo passes off Tomaso as himself, (Angelo,) making an exchange of names. This is a point of some importance, as it introduces the true Angelo to a job which he had long coveted—the painting of the portrait of Isabella, of whose beauty he had become enamored through report. The Duke wishes the portrait painted. Falcone, however, on account of a promise to Tortesa, would have objected to admit to his daughter's presence the handsome Angelo, but in regard to Tomaso, has no scruple. Supposing Tomaso to be Angelo and the artist, the count writes a note to Isabella, requiring her "to admit the painter Angelo." The real Angelo is thus admitted. He and the lady love at first sight, (much in the manner of Romeo and Juliet,) each ignorant of the other's attachment.

The third scene of the second act is occupied with a conversation between Falcone and Tortesa, during which a letter arrives from the Duke, who, having heard of the intended sacrifice of Isabella, offers to redeem the Count's lands and palace, and desires him to preserve his daughter for a certain Count Julian. But Isabella,—who, before seeing Angelo, had been willing to sacrifice herself for her father's sake, and who, since seeing him, had entertained hopes of escaping the hateful match through means of a plot entered into by herself and Zippa—Isabella, we say, is now in despair. To gain time, she at once feigns a love for the usurer, and indignantly rejects the proposal of the Duke. The hour for the wedding draws near. The lady has pre-

pared a sleeping potion, whose effects resemble those of death. (Romeo and Juliet.) She swallows it—knowing that her supposed corpse would lie at night, pursuant to an old custom, in the sanctuary of the cathedral; and believing that Angelo—whose love for herself she has elicited, by a stratagem, from his own lips—will watch by the body, in the strength of his devotion. Her ultimate design (we may suppose, for it is not told,) is to confess all to her lover, on her revival, and throw herself upon his protection—their marriage being concealed, and herself regarded as dead by the world. Zippa, who *really* loves Angelo—(her love for Tortesa, it must be understood, is a very equivocal feeling, for the fact cannot be denied that Mr. Willis makes her love both at the same time)—Zippa, who really loves Angelo—who has discovered his passion for Isabella—and who, as well as that lady, believes that the painter will watch the corpse in the cathedral,—determines, through jealousy, to prevent his so doing, and with this view informs Tortesa that she has learned it to be Angelo's design to steal the body, *for artistical purposes*,—in short as a model to be used in his studio. The usurer, in consequence, sets a guard at the doors of the cathedral. This guard does, in fact, prevent the lover from watching the corpse, but, it appears, does *not* prevent the lady, on her revival and disappointment in not seeing the one she sought, from passing unperceived from the church. Weakened by her long sleep, she wanders aimlessly through the streets, and at length finds herself, when just sinking with exhaustion, at the door of her father. She has no resource but to knock. The Count, who here, we must say, acts very much as Thimble of old—the knight, we mean, of the "scolding wife"—maintains

that she is dead, and shuts the door in her face. In other words, he supposes it to be the ghost of his daughter who speaks; and so the lady is left to perish on the steps. Meantime Angelo is absent from home, attempting to get access to the cathedral; and his servant Tomaso, takes the opportunity of absenting himself also, and of indulging his bibulous propensities while perambulating the town. He finds Isabella as we left her; and through motives which we will leave Mr. Willis to explain, conducts her unresistingly to Angelo's residence, and—*deposits her in Angelo's bed.* The artist now returns —Tomaso is kicked out of doors—and we are not told, but left to presume, that a full explanation and perfect understanding are brought about between the lady and her lover.

We find them, next morning, in the studio, where stands leaning against an easel, the portrait (a full length) of Isabella, with curtains adjusted before it. The stage-directions, moreover, inform us that "the back wall of the room is such as to form a natural ground for the picture." While Angelo is occupied in retouching it, he is interrupted by the arrival of Tortesa with a guard, and is accused of having stolen the corpse from the sanctuary—the lady, meanwhile, having stepped behind the curtain. The usurer insists upon seeing the painting, with a view of ascertaining whether any new touches had been put upon it, which would argue an examination, *post mortem*, of those charms of neck and bosom which the living Isabella would not have unveiled. Resistance is vain—the curtain is torn down; but to the surprise of Angelo, the lady herself is discovered, "with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained the picture."

The *tableau*, we are to believe, deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his betrothed. In the meantime the guards, having searched the house, find the veil which had been thrown over the imagined corpse in the sanctuary; and, upon this evidence, the artist is carried before the Duke. Here he is accused, not only of sacrilege, but of the murder of Isabella, and is about to be condemned to death, when his mistress comes forward in person; thus resigning herself to the usurer to save the life of her lover. But the nobler nature of Tortesa now breaks forth; and, smitten with admiration of the lady's conduct, as well as convinced that her love for himself was feigned, he resigns her to Angelo—although now feeling and acknowledging for the first time that a fervent love has, in his own bosom, assumed the place of this misanthropic ambition which, hitherto, had alone actuated him in seeking her hand. Moreover, he endows Isabella with the lands of her father Falcone. The lovers are thus made happy. The usurer weds Zippa; and the curtain drops upon the promise of the Duke to honor the double nuptials with his presence.

This story, as we have given it, hangs better together (Mr. Willis will pardon our modesty) and is altogether more easily comprehended, than in the words of the play itself. We have really put the best face upon the matter, and presented the whole in the simplest and clearest light in our power. We mean to say that "Tortesa" (partaking largely, in this respect, of the drama of Cervantes and Calderon) is over-clouded—rendered misty—by a world of unnecessary and impertinent *intrigue*. This folly was adopted by the Spanish comedy, and is imitated by us, with the idea of imparting "action,"

"business," "vivacity." But vivacity, however desirable, can be attained in many other ways, and is dearly purchased, indeed, when the price is intelligibility.

The truth is that *cant* has never attained a more owl-like dignity than in the discussion of dramatic principle. A modern stage critic is nothing, if not a lofty contemner of all things simple and direct. He delights in mystery—revels in mystification—has transcendental notions concerning P. S. and O. P., and talks about "stage business and stage effect," as if he were discussing the differential calculus. For much of all this, we are indebted to the somewhat over-profound criticisms of Augustus William Schlegel.

But the *dicta* of common sense are of universal application, and, touching this matter of *intrigue*, if, from its superabundance, we are compelled, even in the quiet and critical *perusal* of a play, to pause frequently and reflect long—to re-read passages over and over again, for the purpose of gathering their bearing upon the whole—of maintaining in our mind a general connexion—what but fatigue can result from the exertion? How then when we come to the representation?—when these passages—trifling, perhaps, in themselves, but important when considered in relation to the plot—are hurried and blurred over in the stuttering enunciation of some miserable rantipole, or omitted altogether through the constitutional lapse of memory so peculiar to those lights of the age and stage, bedight (from being of no conceivable use) supernumeraries? For it must be borne in mind that these bits of *intrigue* (we use the term in the sense of the German critics) appertain generally, indeed altogether, to the after-thoughts of the drama—to the underplots

—are met with, consequently, in the mouth of the lacquies and chamber-maids—and are thus consigned to the tender mercies of the *stellæ minores*. Of course we get but an imperfect idea of what is going on before our eyes. Action after action ensues whose mystery we cannot unlock without the little key which these barbarians have thrown away and lost. Our weariness increases in proportion to the number of these embarrassments, and if the play escape damnation at all, it escapes *in spite* of that intrigue to which, in nine cases out of ten, the author attributes his success, and which he *will* persist in valuing exactly in proportion to the misapplied labor it has cost him.

But dramas of this kind are said, in our customary parlance, to "abound in *plot*." We have never yet met any one, however, who could tell us what precise ideas he connected with the phrase. A mere succession of incidents, even the most spirited, will no more constitute a plot, than a multiplication of zeros, even the most infinite, will result in the production of a unit. This all will admit—but few trouble themselves to think farther. The common notion seems to be in favor of mere *complexity*; but a plot, properly understood, is perfect only inasmuch as we shall find ourselves unable to detach from it *or disarrange* any single incident involved, without *destruction* to the mass. This we say is the point of perfection—a point never yet attained, but not on that account unattainable. Practically, we may consider a plot as of high excellence, when no one of its component parts shall be susceptible of *removal* without *detriment* to the whole. Here, indeed, is a vast lowering of the demand—and with less than this no writer of refined taste should content himself.

As this subject is not only in itself of great importance, but will have at all points a bearing upon what we shall say hereafter, in the examination of various plays, we shall be pardoned for quoting from the "Democratic Review" some passages (of our own) which enter more particularly into the rationale of the subject:

"All the Bridgewater treatises have failed in noticing the *great* idiosyncrasy in the Divine system of adaptation:—that idiosyncrasy which stamps the adaptation as divine, in distinction from that which is the work of merely human constructiveness. I speak of the complete *mutuality* of adaptation. For example:—in human constructions, a particular cause has a particular effect—a particular purpose brings about a particular object; but we see no reciprocity. The effect does not re-act upon the cause—the object does not change relations with the purpose. In Divine constructions, the object is either object or purpose as we choose to regard it, while the purpose is either purpose or object; so that we can never (abstractly—without concretion —without reference to facts of the moment) decide which is which.

"For secondary example:—In polar climates, the human frame, to maintain its animal heat, requires, for combustion in the capillary system, an abundant supply of highly azotized food, such as train oil. Again:—in polar climates nearly the sole food afforded man is the oil of abundant seals and whales. Now whether is oil at hand because imperatively demanded? or whether is it the only thing demanded because the only thing to be obtained? It is impossible to say:—there is an absolute reciprocity of adaptation for which we seek in vain among the works of man.

"The Bridgewater tractists may have avoided this point, on account of its apparent tendency to overthrow the idea of *cause* in general—consequently of a First Cause—of God. But it is more probable that they have failed to perceive what no one preceding them has, to my knowledge, perceived.

"The pleasure which we derive from any exertion of human ingenuity, is in the direct ratio of the *approach* to this species of reciprocity between cause and effect. In the construction of *plot*, for example, in fictitious literature, we should aim at so arranging the points, or incidents, that we cannot distinctly see, in respect to any one of them, whether that one depends from any one other or upholds it. In this sense, of course, perfection of plot is unattainable *in fact*—because Man is the constructor. The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God."

The pleasure derived from the contemplation of the unity resulting from plot, is far more intense than is ordinarily supposed, and, as in Nature we meet with no such combination of *incident*, appertains to a very lofty region of the ideal. In speaking thus we have not said that plot is more than an adjunct to the drama—more than a perfectly distinct and separable source of pleasure. It is *not* an essential. In its intense artificiality it may even be conceived injurious in a certain degree (unless constructed with consummate skill) to that real *life-likeness* which is the soul of the drama of character. Good dramas have been written with very little plot—capital dramas might be written with none at all. Some plays of high merit, having plot, abound in irrelevant incident—in incident, we mean, which could be displaced or removed altogether without effect upon the plot itself, and yet are by no means objectionable as dramas; and for this reason—that

the incidents are *evidently* irrelevant—*obviously* episodical. Of their digressive nature the spectator is so immediately aware, that he views them, as they arise, in the simple light of interlude, and does not fatigue his attention by attempting to establish for them a connexion, or more than an illustrative connexion, with the great interests of the subject. Such are the plays of Shakspeare. But all this is very different from *that* irrelevancy of intrigue which disfigures and very usually damns the work of the unskilful artist. With him the great error lies in *inconsequence*. Underplot is piled upon underplot, (the very word is a paradox,) and all to no purpose—*to no end*. The interposed incidents have no ultimate effect upon the main ones. They may hang upon the mass—they may even coalesce with it, or, as in some intricate cases, they may be so intimately blended as to be lost amid the chaos which they have been instrumental in bringing about—but still they have no portion in the plot, which exists, if at all, independently of their influence. Yet the *attempt* is made by the author to establish and demonstrate a dependence—an identity; and it is the *obviousness of this attempt* which is the cause of weariness in the spectator, who, of course, cannot at once see that his attention is challenged to no purpose—that intrigues so obtrusively forced upon it, are to be found, in the end, without effect upon the leading interests of the play.

"Tortesa" will afford us plentiful examples of this irrelevancy of intrigue—of this misconception of the nature and of the capacities of plot. We have said that our digest of the story is more easy of comprehension than the detail of Mr. Willis. If so, it is because we have forborne to give such

portions as had no influence upon the whole. These served but to embarrass the narrative and fatigue the attention. How much was irrelevant is shown by the brevity of the space in which we have recorded, somewhat at length, all the influential incidents of a drama of five acts. There is scarcely a scene in which is not to be found the germ of an underplot—a germ, however, which seldom proceeds beyond the condition of a bud, or, if so fortunate as to swell into a flower, arrives, in no single instance, at the dignity of fruit. Zippa, a lady altogether without character (dramatic) is the most pertinacious of all conceivable concoctors of plans never to be matured—of vast designs that terminate in nothing—of *cul-de-sac* machinations. She plots in one page and counterplots in the next. She schemes her way from P. S. to O. P., and intrigues perseveringly from the footlights to the slips. A very singular instance of the inconsequence of her manœuvres is found towards the conclusion of the play. The whole of the second scene, (occupying five pages,) in the fifth act, is obviously introduced for the purpose of giving her information, through Tomaso's means, of Angelo's arrest for the murder of Isabella. Upon learning his danger she rushes from the stage, to be present at the trial, exclaiming that her evidence can save his life. We, the audience, of course applaud, and now look with interest to her movements in the scene of the judgment hall. She, Zippa, we think, is somebody after all; she will be the means of Angelo's salvation; she will thus be the chief unraveller of the plot. All eyes are bent, therefore, upon Zippa—but alas, upon the point at issue, Zippa does not so much as open her mouth. It is scarcely too much to say that not a single action of this impertinent little busybody

has any real influence upon the play;—yet she appears upon every occasion—appearing only to perplex.

Similar things abound; we should not have space even to allude to them all. The whole conclusion of the play is supererogatory. The immensity of pure *fuss* with which it is overloaded, forces us to the reflection that all of it might have been avoided by one word of explanation to the duke—an amiable man who admires the talents of Angelo, and who, *to prevent Isabella's marrying against her will*, had *previously* offered to free Falcone of his bonds to the usurer. That he would free him *now*, and thus set all matters straight, the spectator cannot doubt for an instant, and he can conceive no better reason why explanations are *not* made, than that Mr. Willis does not think proper they should be—In fact, the whole drama is exceedingly ill *motivirt*.

We have already mentioned an inadvertence, in the fourth act, where Isabella is made to escape from the sanctuary through the midst of guards who prevented the ingress of Angelo. Another occurs where Falcone's conscience is made to reprove him, upon the appearance of his daughter's supposed ghost, for having occasioned her death by forcing her to marry against her will. The author had forgotten that Falcone submitted to the wedding, after the duke's interposition, only upon Isabella's assurance *that she really loved the usurer*. In the third scene, too, of the first act, the imagination of the spectator is no doubt a little taxed, when he finds Angelo, in the first moment of his introduction to the palace of Isabella, commencing her portrait by laying on color after color, before he has made any attempt at an outline. In the last act, moreover, Tortesa gives to Isabella a deed

made, in general, no advances; and Sculpture, properly considered, is perhaps the *most* imitative of all arts which have a right to the title of Art at all. Looking next at Painting, we find that we have to boast of progress only in the ratio of the inferior imitativeness of Painting, when compared with Sculpture. As far indeed as we have any means of judging, our improvement has been exceedingly little, and did we know anything of ancient Art, in this department, we might be astonished at discovering that we had advanced even far less than we suppose. As regards Architecture, whatever progress we have made, has been precisely in those particulars which have no reference to imitation:—that is to say we have improved the utilitarian and not the ornamental provinces of the art. Where Reason predominated, we advanced; where mere Feeling or Taste was the guide, we remained as we were.

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We have already spoken of the improvements effected in Architecture, in all its utilitarian departments, and in the Drama, at all the points of its mechanism. "Wherever Reason predominates we advance; where mere Feeling or Taste is the guide, we remain as we are." We wish now to suggest that, by the engrafting of Reason upon Feeling and Taste, we shall be able, and thus alone shall be able, to force the modern drama into the production of any profitable fruit.

At present, what is it we do? We are content if, with Feeling and Taste, a dramatist does *as other*

dramatists have done. The most successful of the more immediately modern playwrights has been Sheridan Knowles, and to play Sheridan Knowles seems to be the highest ambition of our writers for the stage. Now the author of "The Hunchback," possesses what we are weak enough to term the true "dramatic feeling," and this true dramatic feeling he has manifested in the most preposterous series of imitations of the Elizabethan drama, by which ever mankind were insulted and beguiled. Not only did he adhere to the old plots, the old characters, the old stage conventionalities throughout; but, he went even so far as to persist in the obsolete phraseologies of the Elizabethan period—and just in proportion to his obstinacy and absurdity at all points, did we pretend to like him the better, and pretend to consider him a great dramatist.

Pretend—for every particle of it was pretence. Never was enthusiasm more utterly false than that which so many "respectable audiences" endeavored to get up for these plays—endeavored to get up, first, because there was a general desire to see the drama revive, and secondly, because we had been all along entertaining the fancy that "the decline of the drama" meant little, if any thing, else than its deviation from the Elizabethan routine—and that, consequently, the return of the Elizabethan routine was, and of necessity must be, the revival of the drama.

But if the principles we have been at some trouble in explaining, are true—and most profoundly do we feel them to be so—if the spirit of imitation is, in fact, the real source of drama's stagnation—and if it is so because of the tendency in all imitation to render Reason subservient to Feeling and to Taste—it is clear that only by deliberate counter-

acting of the spirit, and of the tendency of the spirit, we can hope to succeed in the drama's revival.

The first thing necessary is to burn or bury the "old models," and to forget, as quickly as possible, that ever a play has been penned. The second thing is to consider *de novo* what are the *capabilities* of the drama—not merely what hitherto have been its conventional purposes. The third and last point has reference to the composition of a play (showing to the fullest extent these capabilities) conceived and constructed with Feeling and with Taste, but with Feeling and Taste guided and controlled in every particular by the details of Reason—of Common Sense—in a word, of a Natural Art.

It is obvious, in the meantime, that towards the good end in view, much may be effected by discriminative criticism on what has already been done. The field, thus stated, is of course, practically illimitable—and to Americans the American drama is the special point of interest. We propose, therefore, in a series of papers, to take a somewhat deliberate survey of some few of the most noticeable American plays. We shall do this without reference either to the date of the composition, or its adaptation for the closet or the stage. We shall speak with absolute frankness both of merits and defects—our principal object being understood not as that of mere commentary on the individual play—but on the drama in general, and on the American drama in especial, of which each individual play is a constituent part. We will commence at once with

TORTESA, THE USURER

This is the third dramatic attempt of Mr. Willis, and may be regarded as particularly successful.

since it has received, both on the stage and in the closet, no stinted measure of commendation. This success, as well as the high reputation of the author, will justify us in a more extended notice of the play than might, under other circumstances, be desirable.

The story runs thus:—Tortesa, an usurer of Florence, and whose character is a mingled web of good and evil feelings, gets into his possession the palace and lands of a certain Count Falcone. The usurer would wed the daughter (Isabella) of Falcone not through love, but, in his own words,

> To please a devil that inhabits him—

in fact, to mortify the pride of the nobility, and avenge himself of their scorn. He therefore bargains with Falcone [a narrow-souled villain] for the hand of Isabella. The deed of the Falcone property is restored to the Count, upon an agreement that the lady shall marry the usurer—this contract being invalid should Falcone change his mind in regard to the marriage, or should the maiden demur—but valid should the wedding be prevented through any fault of Tortesa, or through any accident not springing from the will of the father or child. The first scene makes us aware of this bargain, and introduces to us Zippa, a glover's daughter, who resolves, with a view of befriending Isabella, to feign a love for Tortesa, [which, in fact, she partially feels,] hoping thus to break off the match.

The second scene makes us acquainted with a young painter, (Angelo,) poor, but of high talents and ambition, and with his servant, (Tomaso,) an old bottle-loving rascal, entertaining no very exalted opinion of his master's abilities. Tomaso does some injury to a picture, and Angelo is about to run him through the body, when he is interrupted

by a sudden visit from the Duke of Florence, attended by Falcone. The Duke is enraged at the murderous attempt, but admires the paintings in the studio. Finding that the rage of the great man will prevent his patronage if he knows the aggressor as the artist, Angelo passes off Tomaso as himself, (Angelo,) making an exchange of names. This is a point of some importance, as it introduces the true Angelo to a job which he had long coveted—the painting of the portrait of Isabella, of whose beauty he had become enamored through report. The Duke wishes the portrait painted. Falcone, however, on account of a promise to Tortesa, would have objected to admit to his daughter's presence the handsome Angelo, but in regard to Tomaso, has no scruple. Supposing Tomaso to be Angelo and the artist, the count writes a note to Isabella, requiring her "to admit the painter Angelo." The real Angelo is thus admitted. He and the lady love at first sight, (much in the manner of Romeo and Juliet,) each ignorant of the other's attachment.

The third scene of the second act is occupied with a conversation between Falcone and Tortesa, during which a letter arrives from the Duke, who, having heard of the intended sacrifice of Isabella, offers to redeem the Count's lands and palace, and desires him to preserve his daughter for a certain Count Julian. But Isabella,—who, before seeing Angelo, had been willing to sacrifice herself for her father's sake, and who, since seeing him, had entertained hopes of escaping the hateful match through means of a plot entered into by herself and Zippa—Isabella, we say, is now in despair. To gain time, she at once feigns a love for the usurer, and indignantly rejects the proposal of the Duke. The hour for the wedding draws near. The lady has pre-

pared a sleeping potion, whose effects resemble those of death. (Romeo and Juliet.) She swallows it—knowing that her supposed corpse would lie at night, pursuant to an old custom, in the sanctuary of the cathedral; and believing that Angelo—whose love for herself she has elicited, by a stratagem, from his own lips—will watch by the body, in the strength of his devotion. Her ultimate design (we may suppose, for it is not told,) is to confess all to her lover, on her revival, and throw herself upon his protection—their marriage being concealed, and herself regarded as dead by the world. Zippa, who *really* loves Angelo—(her love for Tortesa, it must be understood, is a very equivocal feeling, for the fact cannot be denied that Mr. Willis makes her love both at the same time)—Zippa, who really loves Angelo—who has discovered his passion for Isabella—and who, as well as that lady, believes that the painter will watch the corpse in the cathedral,—determines, through jealousy, to prevent his so doing, and with this view informs Tortesa that she has learned it to be Angelo's design to steal the body, *for artistical purposes*,—in short as a model to be used in his studio. The usurer, in consequence, sets a guard at the doors of the cathedral. This guard does, in fact, prevent the lover from watching the corpse, but, it appears, does *not* prevent the lady, on her revival and disappointment in not seeing the one she sought, from passing unperceived from the church. Weakened by her long sleep, she wanders aimlessly through the streets, and at length finds herself, when just sinking with exhaustion, at the door of her father. She has no resource but to knock. The Count, who here, we must say, acts very much as Thimble of old—the knight, we mean, of the "scolding wife"—maintains

that she is dead, and shuts the door in her face. In other words, he supposes it to be the ghost of his daughter who speaks; and so the lady is left to perish on the steps. Meantime Angelo is absent from home, attempting to get access to the cathedral; and his servant Tomaso, takes the opportunity of absenting himself also, and of indulging his bibulous propensities while perambulating the town. He finds Isabella as we left her; and through motives which we will leave Mr. Willis to explain, conducts her unresistingly to Angelo's residence, and—*deposits her in Angelo's bed.* The artist now returns —Tomaso is kicked out of doors—and we are not told, but left to presume, that a full explanation and perfect understanding are brought about between the lady and her lover.

We find them, next morning, in the studio, where stands leaning against an easel, the portrait (a full length) of Isabella, with curtains adjusted before it. The stage-directions, moreover, inform us that "the back wall of the room is such as to form a natural ground for the picture." While Angelo is occupied in retouching it, he is interrupted by the arrival of Tortesa with a guard, and is accused of having stolen the corpse from the sanctuary—the lady, meanwhile, having stepped behind the curtain. The usurer insists upon seeing the painting, with a view of ascertaining whether any new touches had been put upon it, which would argue an examination, *post mortem*, of those charms of neck and bosom which the living Isabella would not have unveiled. Resistance is vain—the curtain is torn down; but to the surprise of Angelo, the lady herself is discovered, "with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained the picture."

The *tableau*, we are to believe, deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his betrothed. In the meantime the guards, having searched the house, find the veil which had been thrown over the imagined corpse in the sanctuary; and, upon this evidence, the artist is carried before the Duke. Here he is accused, not only of sacrilege, but of the murder of Isabella, and is about to be condemned to death, when his mistress comes forward in person; thus resigning herself to the usurer to save the life of her lover. But the nobler nature of Tortesa now breaks forth; and, smitten with admiration of the lady's conduct, as well as convinced that her love for himself was feigned, he resigns her to Angelo—although now feeling and acknowledging for the first time that a fervent love has, in his own bosom, assumed the place of this misanthropic ambition which, hitherto, had alone actuated him in seeking her hand. Moreover, he endows Isabella with the lands of her father Falcone. The lovers are thus made happy. The usurer weds Zippa; and the curtain drops upon the promise of the Duke to honor the double nuptials with his presence.

This story, as we have given it, hangs better together (Mr. Willis will pardon our modesty) and is altogether more easily comprehended, than in the words of the play itself. We have really put the best face upon the matter, and presented the whole in the simplest and clearest light in our power. We mean to say that "Tortesa" (partaking largely, in this respect, of the drama of Cervantes and Calderon) is over-clouded—rendered misty—by a world of unnecessary and impertinent *intrigue*. This folly was adopted by the Spanish comedy, and is imitated by us, with the idea of imparting "action,"

"business," "vivacity." But vivacity, however desirable, can be attained in many other ways, and is dearly purchased, indeed, when the price is intelligibility.

The truth is that *cant* has never attained a more owl-like dignity than in the discussion of dramatic principle. A modern stage critic is nothing, if not a lofty contemner of all things simple and direct. He delights in mystery—revels in mystification—has transcendental notions concerning P. S. and O. P., and talks about "stage business and stage effect," as if he were discussing the differential calculus. For much of all this, we are indebted to the somewhat over-profound criticisms of Augustus William Schlegel.

But the *dicta* of common sense are of universal application, and, touching this matter of *intrigue*, if, from its superabundance, we are compelled, even in the quiet and critical *perusal* of a play, to pause frequently and reflect long—to re-read passages over and over again, for the purpose of gathering their bearing upon the whole—of maintaining in our mind a general connexion—what but fatigue can result from the exertion? How then when we come to the representation?—when these passages—trifling, perhaps, in themselves, but important when considered in relation to the plot—are hurried and blurred over in the stuttering enunciation of some miserable rantipole, or omitted altogether through the constitutional lapse of memory so peculiar to those lights of the age and stage, bedight (from being of no conceivable use) supernumeraries? For it must be borne in mind that these bits of *intrigue* (we use the term in the sense of the German critics) appertain generally, indeed altogether, to the after-thoughts of the drama—to the underplots

—are met with, consequently, in the mouth of the lacquies and chamber-maids—and are thus consigned to the tender mercies of the *stellæ minores*. Of course we get but an imperfect idea of what is going on before our eyes. Action after action ensues whose mystery we cannot unlock without the little key which these barbarians have thrown away and lost. Our weariness increases in proportion to the number of these embarrassments, and if the play escape damnation at all, it escapes *in spite* of that intrigue to which, in nine cases out of ten, the author attributes his success, and which he *will* persist in valuing exactly in proportion to the misapplied labor it has cost him.

But dramas of this kind are said, in our customary parlance, to "abound in *plot*." We have never yet met any one, however, who could tell us what precise ideas he connected with the phrase. A mere succession of incidents, even the most spirited, will no more constitute a plot, than a multiplication of zeros, even the most infinite, will result in the production of a unit. This all will admit—but few trouble themselves to think farther. The common notion seems to be in favor of mere *complexity;* but a plot, properly understood, is perfect only inasmuch as we shall find ourselves unable to detach from it *or disarrange* any single incident involved, without *destruction* to the mass. This we say is the point of perfection—a point never yet attained, but not on that account unattainable. Practically, we may consider a plot as of high excellence, when no one of its component parts shall be susceptible of *removal* without *detriment* to the whole. Here, indeed, is a vast lowering of the demand—and with less than this no writer of refined taste should content himself.

As this subject is not only in itself of great importance, but will have at all points a bearing upon what we shall say hereafter, in the examination of various plays, we shall be pardoned for quoting from the "Democratic Review" some passages (of our own) which enter more particularly into the rationale of the subject:

"All the Bridgewater treatises have failed in noticing the *great* idiosyncrasy in the Divine system of adaptation:—that idiosyncrasy which stamps the adaptation as divine, in distinction from that which is the work of merely human constructiveness. I speak of the complete *mutuality* of adaptation. For example:—in human constructions, a particular cause has a particular effect—a particular purpose brings about a particular object; but we see no reciprocity. The effect does not re-act upon the cause—the object does not change relations with the purpose. In Divine constructions, the object is either object or purpose as we choose to regard it, while the purpose is either purpose or object; so that we can never (abstractly—without concretion —without reference to facts of the moment) decide which is which.

"For secondary example:—In polar climates, the human frame, to maintain its animal heat, requires, for combustion in the capillary system, an abundant supply of highly azotized food, such as train oil. Again:—in polar climates nearly the sole food afforded man is the oil of abundant seals and whales. Now whether is oil at hand because imperatively demanded? or whether is it the only thing demanded because the only thing to be obtained? It is impossible to say:—there is an absolute reciprocity of adaptation for which we seek in vain among the works of man.

"The Bridgewater tractists may have avoided this point, on account of its apparent tendency to overthrow the idea of *cause* in general—consequently of a First Cause—of God. But it is more probable that they have failed to perceive what no one preceding them has, to my knowledge, perceived.

"The pleasure which we derive from any exertion of human ingenuity, is in the direct ratio of the *approach* to this species of reciprocity between cause and effect. In the construction of *plot*, for example, in fictitious literature, we should aim at so arranging the points, or incidents, that we cannot distinctly see, in respect to any one of them, whether that one depends from any one other or upholds it. In this sense, of course, perfection of plot is unattainable *in fact*—because Man is the constructor. The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God."

The pleasure derived from the contemplation of the unity resulting from plot, is far more intense than is ordinarily supposed, and, as in Nature we meet with no such combination of *incident*, appertains to a very lofty region of the ideal. In speaking thus we have not said that plot is more than an adjunct to the drama—more than a perfectly distinct and separable source of pleasure. It is *not* an essential. In its intense artificiality it may even be conceived injurious in a certain degree (unless constructed with consummate skill) to that real *life-likeness* which is the soul of the drama of character. Good dramas have been written with very little plot—capital dramas might be written with none at all. Some plays of high merit, having plot, abound in irrelevant incident—in incident, we mean, which could be displaced or removed altogether without effect upon the plot itself, and yet are by no means objectionable as dramas; and for this reason—that

the incidents are *evidently* irrelevant—*obviously* episodical. Of their digressive nature the spectator is so immediately aware, that he views them, as they arise, in the simple light of interlude, and does not fatigue his attention by attempting to establish for them a connexion, or more than an illustrative connexion, with the great interests of the subject. Such are the plays of Shakspeare. But all this is very different from *that* irrelevancy of intrigue which disfigures and very usually damns the work of the unskilful artist. With him the great error lies in *inconsequence*. Underplot is piled upon underplot, (the very word is a paradox,) and all to no purpose—*to no end*. The interposed incidents have no ultimate effect upon the main ones. They may hang upon the mass—they may even coalesce with it, or, as in some intricate cases, they may be so intimately blended as to be lost amid the chaos which they have been instrumental in bringing about—but still they have no portion in the plot, which exists, if at all, independently of their influence. Yet the *attempt* is made by the author to establish and demonstrate a dependence—an identity; and it is the *obviousness of this attempt* which is the cause of weariness in the spectator, who, of course, cannot at once see that his attention is challenged to no purpose—that intrigues so obtrusively forced upon it, are to be found, in the end, without effect upon the leading interests of the play.

"Tortesa" will afford us plentiful examples of this irrelevancy of intrigue—of this misconception of the nature and of the capacities of plot. We have said that our digest of the story is more easy of comprehension than the detail of Mr. Willis. If so, it is because we have forborne to give such

portions as had no influence upon the whole. These served but to embarrass the narrative and fatigue the attention. How much was irrelevant is shown by the brevity of the space in which we have recorded, somewhat at length, all the influential incidents of a drama of five acts. There is scarcely a scene in which is not to be found the germ of an underplot—a germ, however, which seldom proceeds beyond the condition of a bud, or, if so fortunate as to swell into a flower, arrives, in no single instance, at the dignity of fruit. Zippa, a lady altogether without character (dramatic) is the most pertinacious of all conceivable concoctors of plans never to be matured—of vast designs that terminate in nothing—of *cul-de-sac* machinations. She plots in one page and counterplots in the next. She schemes her way from P. S. to O. P., and intrigues perseveringly from the footlights to the slips. A very singular instance of the inconsequence of her manœuvres is found towards the conclusion of the play. The whole of the second scene, (occupying five pages,) in the fifth act, is obviously introduced for the purpose of giving her information, through Tomaso's means, of Angelo's arrest for the murder of Isabella. Upon learning his danger she rushes from the stage, to be present at the trial, exclaiming that her evidence can save his life. We, the audience, of course applaud, and now look with interest to her movements in the scene of the judgment hall. She, Zippa, we think, is somebody after all; she will be the means of Angelo's salvation; she will thus be the chief unraveller of the plot. All eyes are bent, therefore, upon Zippa—but alas, upon the point at issue, Zippa does not so much as open her mouth. It is scarcely too much to say that not a single action of this impertinent little busybody

has any real influence upon the play;—yet she appears upon every occasion—appearing only to perplex.

Similar things abound; we should not have space even to allude to them all. The whole conclusion of the play is supererogatory. The immensity of pure *fuss* with which it is overloaded, forces us to the reflection that all of it might have been avoided by one word of explanation to the duke—an amiable man who admires the talents of Angelo, and who, *to prevent Isabella's marrying against her will*, had *previously* offered to free Falcone of his bonds to the usurer. That he would free him *now*, and thus set all matters straight, the spectator cannot doubt for an instant, and he can conceive no better reason why explanations are *not* made, than that Mr. Willis does not think proper they should be—In fact, the whole drama is exceedingly ill *motivirt*.

We have already mentioned an inadvertence, in the fourth act, where Isabella is made to escape from the sanctuary through the midst of guards who prevented the ingress of Angelo. Another occurs where Falcone's conscience is made to reprove him, upon the appearance of his daughter's supposed ghost, for having occasioned her death by forcing her to marry against her will. The author had forgotten that Falcone submitted to the wedding, after the duke's interposition, only upon Isabella's assurance *that she really loved the usurer*. In the third scene, too, of the first act, the imagination of the spectator is no doubt a little taxed, when he finds Angelo, in the first moment of his introduction to the palace of Isabella, commencing her portrait by laying on color after color, before he has made any attempt at an outline. In the last act, moreover, Tortesa gives to Isabella a deed

> Of the Falcone palaces and lands,
> And all the money forfeit by Falcone.

This is a terrible blunder, and the more important as upon this act of the usurer depends the development of his new-born sentiments of honor and virtue—depends, in fact, the most salient *point* of the play. Tortesa, we say, gives to Isabella the lands forfeited by Falcone; but Tortesa was surely not very generous in giving what, clearly, was not his own to give. Falcone had *not forfeited* the deed, which had been restored to him by the usurer, and which was then in his (Falcone's) possession. Hear Tortesa:

> He put it in the bond,
> *That if, by any humor of my own,*
> Or accident that came not from himself,
> Or from his daughter's will, the match were marred,
> *His tenure stood intact.*

Now Falcone is still resolute for the match; but this new generous "humor" of Tortesa induces him (Tortesa) to decline it. Falcone's tenure is then intact; he retains the deed, the usurer is giving away property not his own.

As a drama of character, "Tortesa" is by no means open to so many objections as when we view it in the light of its plot; but it is still faulty. The merits are so exceedingly negative, that it is difficult to say anything about them. The Duke is nobody; Falcone, nothing; Zippa, less than nothing. Angelo may be regarded simply as the medium through which Mr. Willis conveys to the reader his own glowing feelings—his own refined and delicate fancy—(delicate, yet bold)—his own rich voluptuousness of sentiment—a voluptuousness which would offend in almost any other language

than that in which it is so skilfully apparelled. Isabella is—the heroine of the Hunchback. The revolution in the character of Tortesa—or rather the final triumph of his innate virtue—is a dramatic point far older than the hills. It may be observed, too, that although the representation of no human character should be quarrelled with for its inconsistency, we yet require that the inconsistencies be not absolute antagonisms to the extent of neutralization: they may be permitted to be oils and waters, but they must not be alkalies and acids. When, in the course of the *dénouement*, the usurer bursts forth into an eloquence virtue-inspired, we cannot sympathize very heartily in his fine speeches, since they proceed from the mouth of the self-same egotist who, urged by a disgusting vanity, uttered so many sotticisms (about his fine legs, &c.) in the earlier passages of the play. Tomaso is, upon the whole, the best personage. We recognise some originality in his conception, and conception was seldom more admirably carried out.

One or two observations at random. In the third scene of the fifth act, Tomaso, the buffoon, is made to assume paternal authority over Isabella, (as usual, without sufficient purpose,) by virtue of a law which Tortesa thus expounds:

> My gracious liege, there is a law in Florence,
> That if a father, for no guilt or shame,
> Disown and shut his door upon his daughter
> She is the child of him who succors her,
> Who by the shelter of a single night,
> Becomes endowed with the authority
> Lost by the other.

No one, of course, can be made to believe that any such stupid law as this ever existed either in Florence or Timbuctoo; but, on the ground *que le*

vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable, we say that even its real existence would be no justification of Mr. Willis. It has an air of the far-fetched—of the desperate—which a fine taste will avoid as a pestilence. Very much of the same nature is the attempt of Tortesa to extort a second bond from Falcone. The evidence which convicts Angelo of murder is ridiculously frail. The idea of Isabella's assuming the place of the portrait, and so deceiving the usurer, is not only glaringly improbable, but seems adopted from the "Winter's Tale." But in this latter play, the deception is at least possible, for the human figure but imitates a statue. What, however, are we to make of Mr. W.'s stage direction about the back wall's being "so arranged as to form a natural ground for the picture?" Of course, the very slightest movement of Tortesa (and he makes many) would have annihilated the illusion by disarranging the perspective; and in no manner could this latter have been arranged at all for more than one particular point of view—in other words, for more than one particular person in the whole audience. The "asides," moreover, are unjustifiably frequent. The prevalence of this folly (of speaking aside) detracts as much from the acting merit of our drama generally, as any other inartisticality. It utterly destroys verisimilitude. People are not in the habit of soliloquizing aloud—at least, not to any positive extent; and why should an author have to be told, what the slightest reflection would teach him, that an audience, by dint of no imagination, can or will conceive that what is sonorous in their own ears at the distance of fifty feet, cannot be heard by an actor at the distance of one or two?

Having spoken thus of "Tortesa" in terms of

nearly unmitigated censure—our readers may be surprised to hear us say that we think highly of the drama as a whole—and have little hesitation in ranking it before most of the dramas of Sheridan Knowles. Its leading faults are those of the modern drama generally—they are not peculiar to itself—while its great merits *are*. If in support of our opinion, we do not cite points of commendation, it is because those form the mass of the work. And were we to speak of fine passages, we should speak of the entire play. Nor by "fine passages" do we mean passages of merely fine language, embodying fine sentiment, but such as are replete with truthfulness, and teem with the loftiest qualities of the dramatic art. *Points*—capital points abound; and these have far more to do with the general excellence of a play, than a too speculative criticism has been willing to admit. Upon the whole, we are proud of "Tortesa"—and here again, for the fiftieth time at least, record our warm admiration of the abilities of Mr. Willis.

We proceed now to Mr. Longfellow's

SPANISH STUDENT

The reputation of its author as a poet, and as a graceful writer of prose, is, of course, long and deservedly established—but as a dramatist he was unknown before the publication of this play. Upon its original appearance, in "Graham's Magazine," the general opinion was greatly in favor—if not exactly of "The Spanish Student"—at all events of the writer of Outre-Mer. But this general opinion is the most equivocal thing in the world. It is never self-formed. It has very seldom indeed an original development. In regard to the work of an already famous or infamous author it decides,

to be sure, with a laudable promptitude; making up all the mind that it has, by reference to the reception of the author's immediately previous publication;—making up thus the ghost of a mind *pro tem.*—a species of critical shadow, that fully answers, nevertheless, all the purposes of a substance itself, until the substance itself shall be forthcoming. But, beyond this point, the general opinion can only be considered that of the public, as a man may call a book *his*, having bought it. When a *new* writer arises, the shop of the true, thoughtful, or critical opinion, is not simultaneously thrown away—is not immediately set up. Some weeks elapse; and, during this interval, the public, at a loss where to procure an opinion of the *débutante*, have necessarily no opinion of him at all, for the nonce.

The popular voice, then, which ran so much in favor of "The Spanish Student," upon its original issue, should be looked upon as merely the ghost *pro tem.*—as based upon critical decisions respecting the previous works of the author—as having reference in no manner to "The Spanish Student" itself—and thus as utterly meaningless and valueless *per se*.

The few—by which we mean those who think, in contradistinction from the many who think they think—the few who think at first hand, and thus twice before speaking at all—these received the play with a commendation somewhat less *prononcée*—somewhat more guardedly qualified—than Professor Longfellow might have desired, or may have been taught to expect. Still the composition was approved upon the whole. The few words of censure were very far, indeed, from amounting to condemnation. The chief defect insisted upon, was the feebleness of the *dénouement*, and, generally,

of the concluding scenes, as compared with the opening passages. We are not sure, however, that anything like detailed criticism has been attempted in the case—nor do we propose now to attempt it. Nevertheless, the work has interest, not only within itself, but as the first dramatic effort of an author who has remarkably succeeded in almost every other department of light literature than that of the drama. It may be as well, therefore, to speak of it, if not analytically, at least somewhat in detail; and we cannot, perhaps, more suitably commence than by a quotation, without comment, of some of the finer passages:

> And, though she is a virgin outwardly,
> Within she is a sinner; like those panels
> Of doors and altar-pieces the old monks
> Painted in convents, with the Virgin Mary
> On the outside, and on the inside Venus. . . .
>
> I believe
> That woman, in her deepest degradation,
> Holds something sacred, something undefiled,
> Some pledge and keepsake of her higher nature,
> And, like the diamond in the dark, retains
> Some quenchless gleam of the celestial light. . . .
>
> And we shall sit together unmolested,
> And words of true love pass from tongue to tongue,
> As singing birds from one bough to another. . . .
>
> Our feelings and our thoughts
> Tend ever on and rest not in the Present.
> As drops of rain fall into some dark well,
> And from below comes a scarce audible sound,
> So fall our thoughts into the dark Hereafter,
> And their mysterious echo reaches us. . . .
>
> Her tender limbs are still, and, on her breast,
> The cross she prayed to, ere she fell asleep,
> Rises or falls with the soft tide of dreams,
> Like a light barge safe moored. . . .

Hark! how the large and ponderous mace of Time
Knocks at the golden portals of the day! . . .

The lady Violante, bathed in tears
Of love and anger, like the maid of Colchis,
Whom thou, another faithless Argonaut,
Having won that golden fleece, a woman's love
Desertest for this Glaucé. . . .

I read or sit in reverie and watch
The changing color of the waves that break
Upon the idle sea-shore of the mind. . . .

I will forget her. All dear recollections
Pressed in my heart, like flowers within a book,
Shall be torn out and scattered to the winds. . . .

O yes! I see it now—
Yet rather with my heart than with mine eyes,
So faint it is. And all my thoughts sail thither,
Freighted with prayers and hopes, and forward urged
Against all stress of accident, as, in
The Eastern Talt, against the wind and tide
Great ships were drawn to the Magnetic Mountains.

But there are brighter dreams than those of Fame,
Which are the dreams of Love! Out of the heart
Rises the bright ideal of these dreams,
As from some woodland fount a spirit rises
And sinks again into its silent deeps,
Ere the enamored knight can touch her robe!
'Tis this ideal that the soul of Man,
Like the enamored knight beside the fountain,
Waits for upon the margin of Life's stream;
Waits to behold her rise from the dark waters,
Clad in a mortal shape! Alas, how many
Must wait in vain! The stream flows evermore,
But from its silent deeps no spirit rises!
Yet I, born under a propitious star,
Have found the bright ideal of my dreams.

Yes; by the Darro's side
My childhood passed. I can remember still
The river, and the mountains capped with snow;
The villages where, yet a little child,
I told the traveller's fortune in the street;
The smuggler's horse; the brigand and the shepherd;
The march across the moor; the halt at noon;
The red fire of the evening camp, that lighted
The forest where we slept; and, farther back,
As in a dream, or in some former life,
Gardens and palace walls. . . .

This path will lead us to it,
Over the wheat-fields, where the shadows sail
Across the running sea, now green, now blue,
And, like an idle mariner on the ocean,
Whistles the quail. . . .

These extracts will be universally admired. They are graceful, well expressed, imaginative, and altogether replete with the true poetic feeling. We quote them *now*, at the beginning of our review, by way of justice to the poet, and because, in what follows, we are not sure that we have more than a very few words of what may be termed commendation to bestow.

The "Spanish Student" has an unfortunate beginning, in a most unpardonable, and yet, to render the matter worse, in a most indispensable "Preface:"

The subject of the following play, [says Mr. L.,] is taken in part from the beautiful play of Cervantes, *La Gitanilla*. To this source, however, I am indebted for the main incident only, the love of a Spanish student for a Gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa. I have not followed the story in any of its details. In Spain this subject has been twice handled dramatically; first by Juan Perer de Montalvan, in *La Gitanilla*, and afterwards by Antonio de Solis y Rivadeneira in *La Gitanilla de Madrid*. The same subject has also been made use of by Thomas Middleton, an English

dramatist of the seventeenth century. His play is called *The Spanish Gipsy*. The main plot is the same as in the Spanish pieces; but there runs through it a tragic underplot of the loves of Rodrigo and Doña Clara, which is taken from another tale of Cervantes, *La Fuerza de la Sangre*. The reader who is acquainted with *La Gitanilla* of Cervantes, and the plays of Montalvan, Solis, and Middleton, will perceive that my treatment of the subject differs entirely from theirs.

Now the autorial originality, properly considered, is threefold. There is, first, the originality of the general thesis; secondly, that of the several incidents, or thoughts, by which the thesis is developed; and, thirdly, that of manner, or *tone*, by which means alone, an old subject, even when developed through hackneyed incidents, or thoughts, may be made to produce a fully original *effect*—which, after all, is the end truly in view.

But originality, as it is one of the highest, is also one of the rarest of merits. In America it is especially, and very remarkably rare:—this through causes sufficiently well understood. We are content per force, therefore, as a general thing, with either of the lower branches of originality mentioned above, and would regard with high favor, indeed, any author who should supply the great *desideratum* in combining the three. Still the three *should* be combined; and from whom, if not from such men as Professor Longfellow—if not from those who occupy the chief niches in our Literary Temple—shall we expect the combination? But in the present instance, what has Professor Longfellow accomplished? Is he original at any one point? Is he original in respect to the first and most important of our three divisions? "The *subject* of the following play," he says himself, "is taken *in part* from the beautiful play of Cervantes, La Gitanilla." "To this source,

however, I am indebted for *the main incident only*, the love of the Spanish student for a Gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa."

The italics are our own, and the words italicized involve an obvious contradiction. We cannot understand how "the love of the Spanish student for the Gipsy girl" can be called an "incident," or even a "main incident," at all. In fact, this love—this discordant and therefore eventful or incidentful love—is the true *thesis* of the drama of Cervantes. It is this anomalous "love" which originates the incidents by means of which, itself, this "love," the thesis, is developed. Having based his play, then, upon this "love," we cannot admit his claim to originality upon our first count; nor has he any right to say that he has adopted his "subject" "in part." It is clear that he has adopted it altogether. Nor would he have been entitled to claim originality of subject, even had he based his story upon *any variety* of love arising between parties naturally separated by prejudices of *caste*—such, for example, as those which divide the Brahmin from the Pariah, the Ammonite from the African, or even the Christian from the Jew. For here in its ultimate analysis, is the real thesis of the Spaniard. But when the drama is founded, not merely upon this general thesis, but upon this general thesis in the identical application given it by Cervantes—that is to say, upon the prejudice of *caste* exemplified in the case of a Catholic, and this Catholic a Spaniard, and this Spaniard a student, and this student loving a Gipsy, and this Gipsy a dancing-girl, and this dancing-girl bearing the name Preciosa—we are not altogether prepared to be informed by Professor Longfellow that he is indebted for an "incident only" to the "beautiful Gitanilla of Cervantes."

Whether our author is original upon our second and third points—in the true incidents of his story, or in the manner and *tone* of their handling—will be more distinctly seen as we proceed.

It is to be regretted that "The Spanish Student" was not sub-entitled "A Dramatic Poem," rather than "A Play." The former title would have more fully conveyed the intention of the poet; for, of course, we shall not do Mr. Longfellow the injustice to suppose that his design has been, in any respect, a *play*, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Whatever may be its merits in a merely poetical view, "The Spanish Student" could not be endured upon the stage.

Its plot runs thus:—Preciosa, the daughter of a Spanish gentleman, is stolen, while an infant, by Gipsies; brought up as his own daughter, and as a dancing-girl, by a Gipsy leader, Crusado; and by him betrothed to a young Gipsy, Bartolomé. At Madrid, Preciosa loves and is beloved by Victorian, a student of Alcalda, who resolves to marry her, notwithstanding her *caste*, rumors involving her purity, the dissuasions of his friends, and his betrothal to an heiress of Madrid. Preciosa is also sought by the Count of Lara, a *roué*. She rejects him. He forces his way into her chamber, and is there seen by Victorian, who, misinterpreting some words overheard, doubts the fidelity of his mistress, and leaves her in anger, after challenging the Count of Lara. In the duel, the Count receives his life at the hands of Victorian; declares his ignorance of the understanding between Victorian and Preciosa; boasts of favors received from the latter; and, to make good his words, produces a ring which she gave him, he asserts, as a pledge of her love. This ring is a duplicate of one previously given the girl by

Victorian, and known to have been so given, by the Count. Victorian mistakes it for his own, believes all that has been said, and abandons the field to his rival, who, immediately afterwards, while attempting to procure access to the Gipsy, is assassinated by Bartolomé. Meanwhile, Victorian, wandering through the country, reaches Gaudarrama. Here he receives a letter from Madrid, disclosing the treachery practised by Lara, and telling that Preciosa, rejecting his addresses, had been, through his instrumentality hissed from the stage, and now again roamed with the Gipsies. He goes in search of her; finds her in a wood near Guadarrama; approaches her, disguising his voice; she recognises him, pretending she does not, and unaware that he knows her innocence; a conversation of *equivoque* ensues; he sees his ring upon her finger; offers to purchase it; she refuses to part with it; a full *éclaircissement* takes place; at this juncture, a servant of Victorian's arrives with "news from court," giving the first intimation of the true parentage of Preciosa. The lovers set out, forthwith, for Madrid, to see the newly-discovered father. On the route, Bartolomé dogs their steps; fires at Preciosa; misses her; the shot is returned; he falls; and "The Spanish Student" is concluded.

This plot, however, like that of "Tortesa," looks better in our naked digest than amidst the details which develop only to disfigure it. The reader of the play itself will be astonished, when he remembers the name of the author, at the inconsequence of the incidents—at the utter want of skill—of art—manifested in their conception and introduction. In dramatic writing, no principle is more clear than that nothing should be said or done which has not a tendency to develop the catastrophe, or the

characters. But Mr. Longfellow's play abounds in events and conversations that have no ostensible purpose, and certainly answer no end. In what light, for example, since we cannot suppose this drama intended for the stage, are we to regard the second scene of the second act, where a long dialogue between an Archbishop and a Cardinal is wound up by a dance from Preciosa? The Pope thinks of abolishing public dances in Spain, and the priests in question have been delegated to examine, personally, the proprieties or improprieties of such exhibitions. With this view, Preciosa is summoned and required to give a specimen of her skill. Now this, in a mere spectacle, would do very well; for here all that is demanded is an occasion or an excuse for a dance; but what business has it in a pure drama? or in what regard does it further the end of a dramatic poem, intended only to be read? In the same manner, the whole of scene the eighth, in the same act, is occupied with six lines of stage directions, as follows:

The Theatre. The orchestra plays the Cachuca. Sound of castanets behind the scenes. The curtain rises and discovers Preciosa in the attitude of commencing the dance. The Cachuca. Tumult. Hisses. Cries of Brava! and Aguera! She falters and pauses. The music stops. General confusion. Preciosa faints.

But the *inconsequence* of which we complain will be best exemplified by an entire scene. We take scene the fourth, act the first:

An inn on the road to Alcalá. BALTASAR *asleep on a bench. Enter* CHISPA.

Chispa. And here we are, half way to Alcalá, between cocks and midnight. Body o' me! what an inn this is! The light out and the landlord asleep! Holá! ancient Baltasar!

Baltasar [*waking*]. Here I am.

Chispa. Yes, there you are, like a one-eyed alcade in a town without inhabitants. Bring a light, and let me have supper.

Baltasar. Where is your master?

Chispa. Do not trouble yourself about him. We have stopped a moment to breathe our horses; and if he chooses to walk up and down in the open air, looking into the sky as one who hears it rain, that does not satisfy my hunger, you know. But be quick, for I am in a hurry, and every one stretches his legs according to the length of his coverlet. What have we here?

Baltasar [*setting a light on the table*]. Stewed rabbit.

Chispa [*eating*]. Conscience of Portalegre! stewed kitten, you mean!

Baltasar. And a pitcher of Pedro Ximenes, with a roasted pear in it.

Chispa [*drinking*]. Ancient Baltasar, amigo! You know how to cry wine and sell vinegar. I tell you this is nothing but vino tinto of La Mancha, with a tang of the swine-skin.

Baltasar. I swear to you by Saint Simon and Judas, it is all as I say.

Chispa. And I swear to you by Saint Peter and Saint Paul, that it is no such thing. Moreover, your supper is like the hidalgo's dinner—very little meat and a great deal of table-cloth.

Baltasar. Ha! ha! ha!

Chispa. And more noise than nuts.

Baltasar. Ha! ha! ha! You must have your joke, Master Chispa. But shall I not ask Don Victorian in to take a draught of the Pedro Ximenes?

Chispa. No; you might as well say, "Don't you want some?" to a dead man.

Baltasar. Why does he go so often to Madrid?

Chispa. For the same reason that he eats no supper. He is in love. Were you ever in love, Baltasar?

Baltasar. I was never out of it, good Chispa. It has been the torment of my life.

Chispa. What! are you on fire, too, old hay-stack? Why, we shall never be able to put you out.

Victorian [*without*]. Chispa!

Chispa. Go to bed, Pero Grullo, for the cocks are crowing.

Victorian. Ea! Chispa! Chispa!

Chispa. Ea! Senor. Come with me, ancient Baltasar, and bring water for the horses. I will pay for the supper to-morrow. [*Exeunt.*]

Now here the question occurs—what is accomplished? How has the subject been forwarded? We did not need to learn that Victorian was in love—that was known before; and all that we glean is that a stupid imitation of Sancho Panza drinks, in the course of two minutes, (the time occupied in the perusal of the scene,) a bottle of vino tinto, by way of Pedro Ximenes, and devours a stewed kitten in place of a rabbit.

In the beginning of the play this Chispa is the valet of Victorian; subsequently we find him the servant of another; and near the *dénouement*, he returns to his original master. No cause is assigned, and not even the shadow of an object is attained; the whole tergiversation being but another instance of the gross inconsequence which abounds in the play.

The author's deficiency of skill is especially evinced in the scene of the *éclaircissement* between Victorian and Preciosa. The former having been enlightened respecting the true character of the latter by means *of a letter* received at Guadarrama, from a friend at Madrid, (how wofully inartistical is this!) resolves to go in search of her forthwith, and forthwith, also, discovers her in a wood close at hand. Whereupon he approaches, disguising *his voice:*—yes, we are required to believe that a lover may so disguise his voice from his mistress, as even to render his person in full view, irrecognisable! He approaches, and each knowing the other, a conversation ensues under the hypothesis that each to the other is unknown—a very unoriginal, and, of course,

a very silly source of *equivoque*, fit only for the gum-elastic imagination of an infant. But what we especially complain of here, is that our poet should have taken so many and so obvious pains to bring about this position of *equivoque*, when it was impossible that it could have served any other purpose than that of injuring his intended effect! Read, for example this passage:

Victorian. I never loved a maid;
For she I loved was then a maid no more.
Preciosa. How know you that?
Victorian. A little bird in the air
Whispered the secret.
Preciosa. There, take back your gold!
Your hand is cold like a deceiver's hand!
There is no blessing in its charity!
Make her your wife, for you have been abused;
And you shall mend your fortunes mending hers.
Victorian. How like an angel's speaks the tongue of woman,
When pleading in another's cause her own!

Now here it is clear that if we understood Preciosa to be really ignorant of Victorians identity, the "pleading in another's cause her own," would create a favorable impression upon the reader, or spectator. But the advice—"Make her your wife," &c., takes an interested and selfish turn when we remember that she knows to whom she speaks.

Again, when Victorian says,

That is a pretty ring upon your finger,
Pray give it me!

And when she replies:

No, never from my hand
Shall that be taken,

we are inclined to think her only an artful coquette, knowing, as we do, the extent of her knowledge;

on the other hand, we should have applauded her constancy (as the author intended) had she been represented ignorant of Victorian's presence. The effect upon the audience, in a word, would be pleasant in place of disagreeable were the case altered as we suggest, while the effect upon Victorian would remain altogether untouched.

A still more remarkable instance of deficiency in the dramatic *tact* is to be found in the mode of bringing about the discovery of Preciosa's parentage. In the very moment of the *éclaircissement* between the lovers, Chispa arrives almost as a matter of course, and settles the point in a sentence:

> Good news from Court; Good news! Beltran Cruzado
> The Count of the Calés is not your father,
> But your true father has returned to Spain
> Laden with wealth. You are no more a Gipsy.

Now here are three points:—first, the extreme baldness, platitude, and *independence* of the incident narrated by Chispa. The *opportune* return of the father (we are tempted to say the *excessively* opportune) stands by itself—has no relation to any other event in the play—does not appear to arise, in the way of *result*, from any incident or incidents that have arisen before. It has the air of a happy chance, of a God-send, of an ultra-accident, invented by the playwright by way of compromise for his lack of invention. *Nec Deus intersit*, &c.—but here the god has interposed, and the knot is laughably unworthy of the god.

The second point concerns the return of the father "laden with wealth." The lover has abandoned his mistress in her poverty, and, while yet the words of his proffered reconciliation hang upon his lips, comes his own servant with the

news that the mistress' father has returned 'laden with wealth." Now, so far as regards the audience, who are behind the scenes and know the fidelity of the lover—so far as regards the audience, all is right; but the poet had no business to place his heroine in the sad predicament of being forced, provided she is not a fool, to suspect both the ignorance and the disinterestedness of the hero.

The third point has reference to the words—"You are now no more a Gipsy." The thesis of this drama, as we have already said, is love disregarding the prejudices of *caste*, and in the development of this thesis, the powers of the dramatist have been engaged, or should have been engaged during the whole of the three acts of the play. The interest excited lies in our admiration of the sacrifice, and of the love that could make it; but this interest immediately and disagreeably subsides when we find that the sacrifice has been made to no purpose. "You are no more a Gipsy" dissolves the charm, and obliterates the whole impression which the author has been at so much labor to convey. Our romantic sense of the hero's chivalry declines into a complacent satisfaction with his fate. We drop our enthusiasm, with the enthusiast, and jovially shake by the hand the mere man of good luck. But is not the latter feeling the more comfortable of the two? Perhaps so; but "comfortable" is not exactly the word Mr. Longfellow might wish applied to the end of his drama, and then why be at the trouble of building up an effect through a hundred and eighty pages, merely to knock it down at the end of the hundred and eighty-first?

We have already given, at some length, our conceptions of the nature of *plot*—and of that of "The Spanish Student," it seems almost super-

fluous to speak at all. It has nothing of construction about it. Indeed there is scarcely a single incident which has any necessary dependence upon any one other. Not only might we take away two-thirds of the whole without ruin—but without detriment—indeed with a positive benefit to the mass. And, even as regards the mere order of arrangement, we might with a very decided *chance* of improvement, put the scenes in a bag, give them a shake or two by way of shuffle, and tumble them out. The whole mode of collocation—not to speak of the feebleness of the incidents in themselves—evinces, on the part of the author, an utter and radical want of the adapting or constructive power which the drama so imperatively demands.

Of the unoriginality of the thesis we have already spoken; and now, to the unoriginality of the events by which the thesis is developed, we need do little more than allude. What, indeed, *could* we say of such incidents as the child stolen by gipsies—as her education as a *damseuse*—as her betrothal to a Gipsy—as her preference for a gentleman—as the rumors against her purity—as her persecution by a *roué*—as the inruption of the *roué* into her chamber—as the consequent misunderstanding between her and her lover—as the duel—as the defeat of the *roué*—as the receipt of his life from the hero—as his boasts of success with the girl—as the *ruse* of the duplicate ring—as the field, in consequence, abandoned by the lover—as the assassination of Lara while scaling the girls' bed-chamber—as the disconsolate peregrination of Victorian—as the *equivoque* scene with Preciosa—as the offering to purchase the ring and the refusal to part with it—as the "news from court" telling of the Gipsy's true parentage—what *could* we say of all these ridiculous things, except that

we have met them, each and all, some two or three hundred times before, and that they have formed, in a greater or less degree, the staple material of every Hop-O'My-Thumb tragedy since the flood? There is not an incident, from the first page of "The Spanish Student" to the last and most satisfactory, which we would not undertake to find boldly, at ten minutes' notice, in some one of the thousand and one comedies of intrigue attributed to Calderon and Lope de Vega.

But if our poet is grossly unoriginal in his subject, and in the events which evolve it, may he not be original in his handling or *tone?* We really grieve to say that he is not, unless, indeed, we grant him the meed of originality for the peculiar manner in which he has jumbled together the quaint and stilted tone of the old English dramatists with the *dégagée* air of Cervantes. But this is a point upon which, through want of space, we must necessarily permit the reader to judge altogether for himself. We quote, however, a passage from the Second scene of the first act, by way of showing how very easy a matter it is to make a man discourse Sancho Panza:

Chispa. Abernuncio Satanas! and a plague upon all lovers who ramble about at night, drinking the elements, instead of sleeping quietly in their beds. Every dead man to his cemetery, say I; and every friar to his monastery. Now, here's my master Victorian, yesterday a cow-keeper and to-day a gentleman; yesterday a student and to-day a lover; and I must be up later than the nightingale, for as the abbot sings so must the sacristan respond. God grant he may soon be married, for then shall all this serenading cease. Ay, marry, marry, marry! Mother, what does marry mean? It means to spin, to bear children, and to weep, my daughter! And, of a truth, there is something more in matrimony than the wedding-ring. And now, gentlemen, Pax vobiscum! as the ass said to the cabbages!

And, we might add, as an ass *only* should say. In fact, throughout "The Spanish Student," as well as throughout other compositions of its author, there runs a very obvious vein of *imitation*. We are perpetually reminded of something we have seen before—some old acquaintance in manner or matter; and even where the similarity cannot be said to amount to plagiarism, is it still injurious to the poet in the good opinion of him who reads.

Among the minor defects of the play, we may mention the frequent allusion to book incidents not generally known, and requiring each a *note* by way of explanation. The drama demands that everything be so instantaneously evident that he who runs may read; and the only impression effected by these *notes* to a play is, that the author is desirous of showing his reading.

We may mention, also, occasional tautologies—such as:

> Never did I behold thee so *attired*
> And *garmented* in beauty as to-night!

Or—

> What we need
> Is the celestial fire to change the fruit
> Into *transparent* crystal, *bright and clear!*

We may speak, too, of more than occasional errors of grammar. For example, p. 23:

> Did no one see thee? None, my love, but *thou*.

Here "but" is not a conjunction, but a preposition, and governs *thee* in the objective. "None but *thee*" would be right; meaning none *except* thee, *saving* thee. At page 27, "mayst" is somewhat incorrectly written "may'st." At page 34 we have:

> I have no other saint than *thou* to pray to.

Here authority and analogy are both against Mr. Longfellow. "Than" also is here a preposition governing the objective, and meaning *save*, or *except*. "I have none other God than thee," &c. See Horne Tooke. The Latin "*quam te*" is exactly equivalent. At page 85 we read:

> *Like thee* I am a captive, and *like thee*,
> I have a gentle gaoler.

Here "like thee" (although grammatical of course) does not convey the idea. Mr. L. does not mean that the speaker is *like* the bird itself but that his *condition* resembles it. The true reading would thus be:

> *As thou* I am a captive, and, *as thou*
> I have a gentle gaoler:

That is to say, *as thou art*, and *as thou hast*.

Upon the whole, we regret that Professor Longfellow has written this work, and feel especially vexed that he has committed himself by its republication. Only when regarded as a mere poem, can it be said to have merit of any kind. For, in fact, it is only when we separate the poem from the drama, that the passages we have commended as beautiful can be understood to have beauty. We are not too sure, indeed, that a "dramatic poem" is not a flat contradiction in terms. At all events a man of true genius, (and such Mr. L. unquestionably is,) has no business with these hybrid and paradoxical compositions. Let a poem be a poem only; let a play be a play and nothing more. As for "The Spanish Student," its thesis is unoriginal; its incidents are antique; its plot is no plot; its characters have no character: in short, it is little better than a play upon words, to style it "A Play" at all.

LONGFELLOW'S BALLADS*

"IL Y A PARIER," says Chamfort, "*que toute idée publique, toute convention recue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.*"—One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has been yielded to the clamor of the majority;—and this strictly philosophical although somewhat French assertion, has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs; nine-tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *De gustibus non est disputandum*—there should be no disputing about taste. Here the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just right to consider his own taste *the true*, as has any one other—that taste itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the exceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant, have much to answer for as regards confirming the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to *Phrenology*, may, perhaps, be recognised in an analysis of the real principles, and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as readily susceptible of system as are any whatever.

* Ballads and other Poems. By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Author of "Voices of the Night," "Hyperion," etc. Second Edition. John Owen: Cambridge.

In the meantime, the insane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the "good old Pope," or the "good old Goldsmith school" of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural, and *more ideal* compositions of such authors as Coëtlogon and Lamartine* in France; Herder, Körner, and Uhland in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegnér, and Nyberg† in Sweden; Keats, Shelly, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. "*De gustibus non*," say these "good-old-school" fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is—"We pity your taste—we pity everybody's taste but our own."

It is our purpose to controvert the popular idea that the poets just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries of expression, and to other meretricious effects, their appreciation by certain readers:—to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry and *such alone* has fulfilled the legitimate office of the muse; has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man.

This volume of Ballads and Tales includes, with several brief original pieces, a translation from the Swedish of Tegnér. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the metre of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well, and what, from the nature of language itself, never *can* be well done. Unless, for example, we shall come to have an influx of *spondees*

* We allude here chiefly to the "David" of Coëtlogon, and *only* to the "*Chûte d'un Ange*" of Lamartine.

† C. Julia Nyberg, author of the "Dikter von Euphrosyne."

in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondaic words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "*compound*," "*context*," "*footfall*," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it *is* so will become evident upon reading "The Children of the Lord's Supper," where the sole *readable* verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondaic dissyllables. We mean to say *readable as hexameters;* for many of them will read very well as mere English dactylics with certain irregularities.

Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistical skill is great, and his ideality high. But his conception of the *aims* of poesy *is all wrong;* and this we shall prove at some future day—to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all *out of place.* He has written brilliant poems—by accident; that is to say when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking—a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the *under-current* of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth, as in the majority of his compositions. . . . .

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the *aims* of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, laboring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, what *are* his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the *general* tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (in pure convention-

ality) he regards the inculcation of a *moral* as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the *general* tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent *tone* of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as *truth*. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffling huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog-star. . . . . .

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have *seemed* to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the *imaginative*, or, more popularly, the creative portions *alone* have ensured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be re-

garded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection, in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem has been blindly regarded as *ex statû* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious to indulge, in all examination of her character. . . . .

Poesy is a response—unsatisfactory it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which Poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms—a beauty which, perhaps, *no* possible combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by *novel* combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist—or by novel combinations *of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order.* We thus clearly deduce the *novelty*, the *originality*, the *invention*, the *imagination*, or lastly the *creation* of BEAUTY, (for the terms as here employed are synonymous,) as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resoluble into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognise the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the concep-

tion of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable the fact that no definition exists, in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the *chief* attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word ποιησις itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of poetry as "*L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction.*" With this definition (of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent) the German terms *Dichthunst*, the art of fiction, and *Dichten*, to feign, which are used for "*poetry*" and "*to make verses*," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the *combination* of the two omni-prevalent ideas that the novelty, and, we believe, the force of our own proposition is to be found. . . . .

The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound, *may be* the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. Contenting ourselves with firm conviction, that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment to Poesy, as *never* to be neglected by him who is truly poetical—is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended, that he is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality, for the mere sake of rounding a definition. That our definition of poetry will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be

understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of *all* that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as "Armstrong on Health," a revolting production; Pope's "Essay on Man," which may well be content with the title of an "Essay in Rhyme;" "Hudibras" and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions—but deny them the position held. In the notice of Brainard's Poems, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument. (rhythm,) had tended, more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself—an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind, compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques. . . . .

We have shown our ground of objection to the general *themes* of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavors to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms *prose* may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question—"might not this matter be as well or better handled in *prose?*" If it *may*, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptation of the term *Beauty* we are content to rest; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of the *sublime*.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume,

there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the ideas we have proposed; although the volume, as a whole, is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems *nearly true*, "The Village Blacksmith"; "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and especially "The Skeleton in Armor." In the first-mentioned we have the *beauty* of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a *moral* from what has gone before. In "The Wreck of the Hesperus" we have the *beauty* of child-like confidence and innocence, with that of the father's stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling *horror* belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There *are* points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes—points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime, by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

> The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
> The salt tears in her eyes,

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In the "Skeleton in Armor" we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous *points* of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding

the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are few truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really *necessary*. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is *unique*, in the proper acceptation of this term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole;* and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially, upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel *the unity or totality of interest*. But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion, is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix

and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us, there is none in which the aim of instruction, or *truth*, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, *beauty*. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the *under-current* of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's "Alciphron"; but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in "Blind Bartimeus" and the "Goblet of Life," where, it will be observed that the *sole* interest of the upper-current of meanng depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et preterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek *finales* of "Blind Bartimeus" are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbon-ish pedantry of Byron introduced, is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. *His* time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is in fact, essentially Germanic. "The Luck of Edenhall," however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the "Democratic Review" demands. This composition appears to us *one of the very finest*. It has all the free, hearty, *obvious* movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is

combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the "Sword-Song" of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural—so perfectly fluent from the incidents—that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more *physical* than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency, in Song, is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken—it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word *forms* in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and color) that the soul seeks the realization of its dreams of Beauty. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its metre—the ordinary Latin or Greek Hexameter—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, *for English ears*, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees—that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short, the ancients were con-

tent to read *as they scanned*, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney, and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The "Democratic Review," in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, *to English Ears, as a Greek hexameter*. There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle.

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsura—just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the Bucolics thus—

Tityre | tu patu | læ recu | bans—

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number of Professor Longfellow's hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, *continued for two feet*. For example—

Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on | balancing | branches.

In this example, also, "branches," which is a double ending, must be regarded as the cæsura, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the "Democratic Review," we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question—with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The Review speaks of "Maidenhood" as a poem, "not to be understood but as the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of "The Luck of Edenhall."

"Maidenhood" is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its *meaning* seems simplicity itself. A maden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system" has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but *one* idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads *us*, individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely *but one idea* in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually unfolded" without other ideas, is, to us, a

mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one *leading* idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is, that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of "Excelsior," Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labor under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its *truth;* and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow-men who are less highly gifted; but their power of overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its *truth*, is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even *the aim.* Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzch. Here all details are omitted—nothing can be farther from *truth.* Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than

disgusted with *the want of the eyeball.* The hair of the Venus de Medicis *was gilded.* Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists—but they were not even *classed among their pictures.* If truth is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observations of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. "Excelsior" has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the *earnest upward impulse of the soul*—an impulse not to be dubdued even in Death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "*Excelsior!*" (higher still!) struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" and, even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle, his cry is *still* "*Excelsior!*" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted—an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending *progress.* That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor both with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

FANCY AND IMAGINATION

DRAKE'S CULPRIT FAY AND MOORE'S ALCIPHRON*

AMID the vague mythology of Egypt, the voluptuous scenery of her Nile, and the gigantic mysteries of her pyramids, Anacreon Moore has found all of that striking *materiel* which he so much delights in working up, and which he has embodied in the poem before us. The design of the story (for plot it has none) has been a less consideration than its facilities, and is made subservient to its execution. The subject is comprised in five epistles. In the first, Alciphron, the head of the Epicurean sect at Athens, writes, from Alexandria, to his friend Cleon, in the former city. He tells him (assigning a reason for quitting Athens and her pleasures) that, having fallen asleep one night after protracted festivity, he beholds, in a dream, a spectre, who tells him that, beside the sacred Nile, he, the Epicurean, shall find that Eternal Life for which he had so long been sighing. In the second, from the same to the same, the traveller speaks, at large and in the rapturous terms, of the scenery of Egypt: of the beauty of her maidens; of an approaching Festival of the Moon; and of a wild hope entertained that amid the subterranean chambers of some huge pyramid lies the secret which he covets, the secret of Life Eternal. In the third letter, he relates a love adventure at the Festival. Fascinated by the charms of one of the nymphs of a procession,

* Alciphron, a Poem. By Thomas Moore, Esq., author of Lalla Rookh, etc., etc. Carey and Hart, Philadelphia.

he is first in despair at losing sight of her, then overjoyed at again seeing her in Necropolis, and finally traces her steps until they are lost near one of the smaller pyramids. In epistle the fourth, (still from the same to the same,) he enters and explores the pyramid, and, passing through a complete series of Eleusinian mysteries, is at length successfully initiated into the secrets of Memphian priestcraft; we learning this latter point from letter the fifth, which concludes the poem, and is addressed by Orcus, high priest to Memphis, to Decius, a prætorian prefect.

A new poem from Moore calls to mind that critical opinion respecting him which had its origin, we believe, in the dogmatism of Coleridge—we mean the opinion that he is essentially the poet of *fancy*—the term being employed in contradistinction to *imagination*. "The Fancy," says the author of the "Ancient Mariner," in his *Biographia Literaria*, "the fancy combines, the imagination creates." And this was intended, and has been received, as a distinction. If so at all, it is one without a difference; without even a difference of *degree*. The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination; and neither creates in any respect. All novel conceptions are nearly unusual combinations. The mind of man can *imagine* nothing which has not really existed; and this point is susceptible of the most positive demonstration—see the Baron de Bielfeld, in his *Premiers Traits de L'Erudition Universelle*, 1767. It will be said, perhaps, that we can imagine a *griffin*, and that a griffin does not exist. Not the griffin certainly, but its component parts. It is a mere compendium of known limbs and features—of known qualities. Thus with all which seems to be *new*—which appears to be a *creation* of intellect. It is re-soluble into the old. The wildest and most vigor-

ous effort of mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

We might make a distinction, *of degree*, between the fancy and the imagination, in saying that the latter is the former *loftily employed*. But experience proves this distinction to be unsatisfactory. What we feel and *know* to be fancy, will be found still only *fanciful*, whatever be the theme which engages it. It retains its idiosyncrasy under all circumstances. No *subject* exalts it into the ideal. We might exemplify this by reference to the writings of one whom our patroitism, rather than our judgment, has elevated to a niche in the Poetic Temple which he does not becomingly fill, and which he cannot long uninterruptedly hold. We allude to the late Dr. Rodman Drake, whose puerile abortion, "The Culprit Fay," we examined, at some length, in a *critique* elsewhere; proving it, we think, beyond all question, to belong to that class of the pseudo-ideal, in dealing with which we find ourselves embarrassed between a kind of half-consciousness that we ought to admire, and the certainty that we do not. Dr. Drake was employed upon a good subject—at least it is a subject precisely identical with those which Shakspeare was wont so happily to treat, and in which, especially, the author of "Lilian" has so wonderfully succeeded. But the American has brought to his task a mere *fancy*, and has grossly failed in doing what many suppose him to have done—in writing an ideal or imaginative poem. There is not one particle of the true ποιησις about "The Culprit Fay." We say that the subject, even at its best points, did not aid Dr. Drake in the slightest degree. He was never more than *fanciful*. The passage, for example, chiefly cited by his admirers, is the account of the "Sylphid Queen"; and to show the difference be-

tween the false and true ideal, we collated, in the review just alluded to, this, the most admired passage, with one upon a similar topic by Shelley. We shall be pardoned for repeating here, as nearly as we remember them, some words of what we then said.

The description of the Sylphid Queen runs thus:

But oh, how fair the shape that lay
  Beneath a rainbow bending bright;
She seemed to the entranced Fay,
  The loveliest of the forms of light;
Her mantle was the purple rolled
  At twilight in the west afar;
'Twas tied with threads of dawning gold,
  And buttoned with a sparkling star.
Her face was like the lily roon
  That veils the vestal planet's hue;
Her eyes two beamlets from the moon
  Set floating in the welkin blue.
Her hair is like the sunny beam,
And the diamond gems which round it gleam
Are the pure drops of dewy even
That ne'er have left their native heaven.

In the *Queen Mab* of Shelley, a Fairy is thus introduced:

Those who had looked upon the sight,
  Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling—

And thus described—

The Fairy's frame was slight; yon fibrous cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,

Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

In these exquisite lines the faculty of mere comparison is but little exercised—that of ideality in a wonderful degree. It is probable that in a similar case Dr. Drake would have formed the face of the fairy of the "fibrous cloud," her arms of the "pale tinge of even," her eyes of the "fair stars," and her body of the "twilight shadow." Having so done, his admirers would have congratulated him upon his *imagination*, not taking the trouble to think that they themselves could at any moment *imagine* a fairy of materials equally as good, and conveying an equally distinct idea. Their mistake would be precisely analogous to that of many a schoolboy who admires the imagination displayed in Jack the Giant-Killer, and is finally rejoiced at discovering his own imagination to surpass that of the author, since the monsters destroyed by Jack are only about forty feet in height, and he himself has no trouble in imagining some of one hundred and forty. It will be seen that the fairy of Shelley is not a mere compound of incongruous natural objects, inartificially put together, and unaccompanied by any *moral* sentiment—but a being, in the illustration of whose nature some physical elements are used collaterally as adjuncts, while the main conception springs immediately, *or thus apparently springs*, from the brain of the poet, enveloped in the moral sentiments of grace, of color, of motion—of the beautiful, of the *mystical*, of the august—in short, of the ideal.

The truth is, that the just distinction between the fancy and the imagination (and which is still but a distinction *of degree*) is involved in the consideration of the *mystic*. We give this as an idea of our own altogether. We have no authority for our opinion—but do not the less firmly hold it. The term *mystic* is here employed in the sense of Augustis William Schlegel, and of most other German critics. It is applied by them to that class of composition in which there lies beneath the transparent upper current of meaning, an under or *suggestive* one. What we vaguely term the *moral* of any sentiment is its mystic or secondary expression. It has the vast force of an accompaniment in music. This vivifies the air; that spiritualizes the *fanciful* conception, and lifts it into the *ideal*.

This theory will bear, we think, the most rigorous tests which can be made applicable to it, and will be acknowledged as tenable by all who are themselves imaginative. If we carefully examine those poems, or portions of poems, or those prose romances, which mankind have been accustomed to designate as *imaginative*, (for an instinctive feeling leads us to employ properly the term whose full import we have still never been able to define,) it will be seen that all so designated are remarkable for the *suggestive* character which we have discussed. They are strongly *mystic*—in the proper sense of the word. We will here only call to the reader's mind, the *Prometheus Vinctus* of Æschylus; the *Inferno* of Dante; the *Destruction of Numantia* by Cervantes; the *Comus* of Milton; the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Christabel*, and the *Kubla Khan*, of Coleridge; the *Nightingale* of Keats; and, most especially, the *Sensitive Plant* of Shelley, and the *Undine* of De La Motte Fouqué. These two latter poems (for we call them both such) are the

finest possible examples of the purely *ideal.* There is little of fancy here, and everything of imagination. With each note of the lyre is heard a ghostly, and not always a distinct, but an august and soul-exalting *echo.* In every glimpse of beauty presented, we catch, through long and wild vistas, dim bewildering visions of a far more ethereal beauty *beyond.* But not so in poems which the world has always persisted in terming *fanciful.* Here the upper current is often exceedingly brilliant and beautiful; but then men *feel* that this upper current *is all.* No Naiad voice addresses them *from below.* The notes of the air of the song do not tremble with the according tones of the accompaniment.

It is the failure to perceive these truths which has occasioned the embarrassment experienced by our critics while discussing the topic of Moore's station in the poetic world—that hesitation with which we are obliged to refuse him the loftiest rank among the most noble. The popular voice, and the popular heart, have denied him that happiest quality, imagination—and here the popular voice (*because* for once it is gone with the popular heart) is right—but yet only relatively so. Imagination is not the leading feature of the poetry of Moore; but he possesses it in no little degree.

We will quote a few instances from the poem now before us—instances which will serve to exemplify the distinctive feature which we have attributed to ideality.

It is the *suggestive* force which exalts and ethereal-izes the passages we copy.

> Or is it that there lurks, indeed,
> Some truth in man's prevailing creed,
> And that our guardians from on high,

Come, in that pause from toil and sin,
To put the senses' curtain by,
And on the wakeful soul look in!

Again—

The eternal pyramids of Memphis burst
Awfully on my sight—standing sublime
'Twixt earth and heaven, the watch-towers of time,
From whose lone summit, when his reign hath past,
From earth forever, he will look his last.

And again—

Is there for man no hope—but this which dooms
His only lasting trophies to be tombs!
But 'tis not so—earth, heaven, all nature shows
He *may* become immortal, *may* unclose
The wings within him wrapt, and proudly rise
Redeemed from earth a creature of the skies!

And here—

The pyramid shadows, stretching from the light,
Look like the first colossal steps of night,
Stalking across the valley to invade
The distant hills of porphyry with their shade!

And once more—

There Silence, thoughtful God, who loves
The neighborhood of Death, in groves
Of asphodel lies hid, and weaves
His hushing spell among the leaves

Such lines as these, we must admit, however, are not of frequent occurrence in the poem—the sum of whose great beauty is composed of the several sums of a world of minor excellences.

Moore has always been renowned for the number and appositeness, as well as novelty, of his similes; and the renown thus acquired is strongly indicial of his deficiency in that nobler merit—the noblest of them all. No poet thus distinguished was ever

richly ideal. Pope and Cowper are remarkable instances in point. Similes (so much insisted upon by the critics of the reign of Queen Anne) are never, in our opinion, strictly in good taste, whatever may be said to the contrary, and certainly can never be made to accord with other high qualities, except when naturally arising from the subject in the way of illustration—and, when thus arising, they have seldom the merit of novelty. To be novel, they must fail in essential particulars. The higher minds will avoid their frequent use. They form no portion of the ideal, and appertain to the fancy alone.

We proceed with a few random observations upon Alciphron. The poem is distinguished throughout by a very happy facility which has never been mentioned in connexion with its author, but which has much to do with the reputation he has obtained. We allude to the facility with which he recounts a poetical story in a *prosaic* way. By this is meant that he preserves the tone and method of arrangement of a prose relation, and thus obtains great advantages over his more stilted compeers. His is no poetical *style*, (such, for example, as the French have—a distinct style for a distinct purpose,) but an easy and ordinary prose manner, *ornamented into poetry*. By means of this he is enabled to enter, with ease, into details which would baffle any other versifier of the age, and at which Lamartine would stand aghast. For anything that we see to the contrary, Moore might solve a cubic equation in verse. His facility in this respect is truly admirable, and is, no doubt, the result of long practice after mature deliberation. We refer the reader to page 50, of the pamphlet now reviewed; where the minute and conflicting incidents of the descent into the pyramid are detailed with absolutely *more* precision than

we have ever known a similar relation detailed with in prose.

In general dexterity and melody of versification the author of Lalla Rookh is unrivalled; but he is by no means at all times accurate, falling occasionally into the common foible of throwing accent upon syllables too unimportant to sustain it. Thus, in the lines which follow, where we have italicized the weak syllables:

> And mark 'tis nigh; already *the* sun bids. . . .
> While hark from all the temples *a* rich swell. . . .
> I rushed in*to* the cool night air.

He also too frequently draws out the word Heaven into two syllables—a protraction which it *never* will support.

His English is now and then objectionable, as, at page 26, where he speaks of

> lighted barks
> That down Syene's cataract *shoots*.

making *shoots* rhyme with flutes, below; also, at page 6, and elsewhere, where the word *none* has improperly a singular, instead of a plural force. But such criticism as this is somewhat captious, for in general he is most highly polished.

At page 27, he has stolen his "woven snow" from the *ventum textilem* of Apuleius.

At page 8, he either himself has misunderstood the tenets of Epicurus, or wilfully misrepresents them through the voice of Alciphron. We incline to the former idea, however; as the philosophy of that most noble of the sophists is habitually perverted by the moderns. Nothing could be more spiritual and less sensual than the doctrines we so torture into wrong. But we have drawn out this notice at

somewhat too great length, and must conclude. In truth, the exceeding beauty of "Alciphron" has bewildered and detained us. We could not point out a poem in any language which, as a whole, greatly excels it. It is far superior to Lalla Rookh. While Moore does not reach, except in rare snatches, the height of the loftiest qualities of some whom we have named, yet he has written finer poems than any, of equal length, by the greatest of his rivals. His radiance, not always as bright as some flashes from other pens, is yet a radiance of equable glow, whose total amount of light exceeds, by very much, we think, that total amount in the case of any cotemporary writer whatsoever. A vivid fancy; an epigrammatic spirit; a fine taste; vivacity, dexterity, and a musical ear; have made him very easily what he is, the most popular poet now living—if not the most popular that ever lived—and, perhaps, a slight modification at birth of that which phrenologists have agreed to term *temperament*, might have made him the truest and noblest votary of the muse of any age or clime. As it is, we have only casual glimpses of that *mens divinior* which is assuredly enshrined within him.

E. P. WHIPPLE AND OTHER CRITICS

OUR most analytic, if not altogether our best critic, (Mr. Whipple, perhaps, excepted,) is Mr. *William A. Jones*, author of "The Analyst." How he would write elaborate criticisms I cannot say; but his summary judgments of authors are, in general, discriminative and profound. In fact, his papers on *Emerson* and on *Macaulay*, published in "Arcturus," are better than merely "profound," if we take the word in its now desecrated sense; for they are at once pointed, lucid, and just:—as summaries, leaving nothing to be desired.

Mr. Whipple has less analysis, and far less candor, as his depreciation of "Jane Eyre" will show; but he excells Mr. Jones in sensibility to Beauty, and is thus the better critic of Poetry. I have read nothing finer in its way than his eulogy on Tennyson. I say "eulogy"—for the essay in question is unhappily little more:—and Mr. Whipple's paper on Miss Barrett, was *nothing* more. He has less discrimination than Mr. Jones, and a more obtuse sense of the critical office. In fact, he has been infected with that unmeaning and transparent heresy—the cant of critical Boswellism, by dint of which we are to shut our eyes tightly to all autorial blemishes, and open them, like owls, to all autorial merits. Papers thus composed may be good in their way, just as an impertinent *cicerone* is good in *his* way; and the way, in either case, may still be a small one.

Boccalini, his "Advertisements from Parnassus,"

tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo with a very caustic review of a very admirable poem. The god asked to be shown the beauties of the work; but the critic replied that he troubled himself only about the errors. Hereupon Apollo gave him a sack of unwinnowed wheat—bidding him pick out all the chaff for his pains.

Now this fable does very well as a hit at the critics; but I am by no means sure that the Deity was in the right. The fact is, that the limits of the strict critical duty are grossly misapprehended. We may go so far as to say that, while the critic is *permitted* to play, at times, the part of the mere commentator—while he is *allowed*, by way of merely *interesting* his readers, to put in the fairest light the merits of his author—his *legitimate* task is still, in pointing out and analyzing defects and showing how the work might have been improved, to aid the general cause of Letters, without undue heed of the individual literary men. Beauty, to be brief, should be considered in the light of an axiom, which, to become at once evident, needs only to be distinctly *put*. It is *not* Beauty, if it require to be demonstrated as such:—and thus to point out too particularly the merits of a work, is to admit that they are *not* merits altogether.

When I say that both Mr. Jones and Mr. Whipple are, in some degree, imitators of Macaulay, I have no design that my words should be understood as disparagement. The style and general conduct of Macaulay's critical papers could scarcely be improved. To call his manner "conventional," is to do it gross injustice. The manner of Carlyle *is* conventional—with himself. The style of Emerson is conventional—with himself *and* Carlyle. The style of Miss Fuller is conventional—with herself and *Emerson* and Carlyle:—that is to say, it is a triple-distilled

conventionality:—and by the word "conventionality," as here used, I mean very nearly what, as regards personal conduct, we style "affectation"—that is, an assumption of airs or *tricks* which have no basis in reason or common sense. The quips, quirks, and curt oracularities of the Emersons, Alcots and Fullers, are simply Lily's Euphuisms revived. Very different, indeed, are the *peculiarities* of Macaulay. He has his mannerisms; but we see that, by dint of them, he is enabled to accomplish the extremes of unquestionable excellences—the extreme of clearness, of vigor (dependent upon clearness) of grace, and very especially of thoroughness. For his short sentences, for his antitheses, for his modulations, for his climaxes—for everything that he does—a very slight analysis suffices to show a distinct reason. His manner, thus, is simply the perfection of that justifiable rhetoric which has its basis in common sense; and to say that such rhetoric is never called in to the aid of *genius*, is simply to disparage genius, and by no means to discredit the rhetoric. It is nonsense to assert that the highest genius would not be benefited by attention to its modes of manifestation—by availing itself of that Natural Art which it too frequently despises. Is it not evident that the more intrinsically valuable the rough diamond, the more gain accrues to it from polish?

Now, since it would be nearly impossible to vary the rhetoric of Macaulay, in any material degree, without deterioration in the *essential* particulars of clearness, vigor, etc., those who write *after* Macaulay have to choose between the two horns of a dilemma:—they must be weak and original, or imitative and strong:—and since imitation in a case of this kind, is merely adherence to *Truth* and *Reason* as pointed out by one who feels their value,

the author who should forego the advantages of the "imitation" for the mere sake of being erroneously original, "*n'est pas si sage qu'il croit.*"

The true course to be pursued by our critics—justly sensible of Macaulay's excellences—is *not*, however, to be content with tamely following in his footsteps—but to outstrip him in his own path—a path not so much his as Nature's. We must not fall into the error of fancying that he is *perfect* merely because he excells (in point of style) all his British cotemporaries. Some such idea as this seems to have taken possession of Mr. Jones, when he says:

"Macaulay's style is admirable—full of color, perfectly clear, free from all obstructions, exactly English, and as pointedly antithetical as possible. We have marked two passages on Southey and Byron, so happy *as to defy improvement.* The one is a sharp epigrammatic paragraph on Southey's political bias:

> Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts. He judges of a theory or a public measure, of a religion, a political party, a peace or a war, as men judge of a picture or a statue, by the effect produced on his imagination. A chain of associations is to him what a chain of reasoning is to other men; and what he calls his opinions are, in fact, merely his tastes.

The other a balanced character of Lord Byron:

> In the rank of Lord Byron, in his understanding, in his character, in his very person, there was a strange union of opposite extremes. He was born to all that men covet and admire. But in every one of those eminent advantages which he possessed over others, there was mingled something of misery and debasement. He was sprung from a house, ancient, indeed, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of crimes and follies, which had attained a scandulous publicity. The kinsman whom he succeeded had died poor, and but for merciful judges, would have died upon the gallows. The young peer had great intellectual powers; yet there was an unsound part in his mind.

He had naturally a generous and tender heart; but his temper was wayward and irritable. He had a head which statuaries loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the beggars in the street mimicked.

Let us now look at the first of these paragraphs. The opening sentence is inaccurate at all points. The word "government" does not give the author's idea with sufficient definitiveness; for the term is *more* frequently applied to the *system* by which the affairs of a nation are regulated than to the act of regulating. "The government," we say, for example, "does so and so"—meaning those who govern. But Macaulay intends simply the act or acts called "governing," and this word should have been used, as a matter of course. The "Mr." prefixed to "Southey," is superfluous; for no sneer is designed; and, in *mistering* a well-known author, we hint that he is not entitled to that exemption which we accord to Homer, Dante, or Shakspeare. "*To* Mr. Southey" would have been right, had the succeeding words been "government seems one of the fine arts":—but, as the sentence stands, "*With* Mr. Southey" is demanded. "Southey," too, being the principal subject of the paragraph, should precede "government," which is mentioned only in its relation to Southey. "One of the fine arts" is pleonastic, since the phrase conveys nothing more than "a fine art" would convey.

The second sentence is quite as faulty. Here Southey loses his precedence as the subject; and thus the "He" should follow "a theory," "a public measure," etc. By "religion" is meant a "*creed*":—this latter word should therefore be used. The conclusion of the sentence is very awkward. Southey is said to judge of a peace or war, etc., as men judge of a picture or a statue, and the words which suc-

ceed are intended to explain *how* men judge of a picture or a statue:—these words should, therefore, run thus:—"by the effect produced on *their* imaginations." "Produced," moreover, is neither so exact nor so "English" as "wrought." In saying that Southey judges of a political party, etc., as *men* judge of a picture, etc., Southey is quite excluded from the category of "men." "*Other* men," was no doubt originally written, but "other" erased, on account of the "other men" occurring in the sentence below.

Coming to this last, we find that "a chain of associations" is not properly parallelled by "a chain of reason*ing*. We must say either "a chain of association," to meet the "reason*ing*" or "a chain of rea*sons*," to meet the "associations." The repetition of "what" is awkward and unpleasant. The entire paragraph should be thus remodelled:

With Southey, governing is a fine art. Of a theory or a public measure—of a creed, a political party, a peace or a war—he judges by the imaginative effect; as only such things as pictures or statues are judged of by other men. What to them a chain of reasoning is, to him is a chain of association; and, as to his opinions, they are nothing but his tastes.

The blemishes in the paragraph about Byron are more negative than those in the paragraph about Southey. The first sentence needs vivacity. The adjective "opposite" is superfluous:—so is the particle "there." The second and third sentences are, properly, one. "Some" would fully supply the place of "something of." The whole phrase "which he possessed over others," is supererogatory. "Was sprung" in place of "sprang," is altogether unjustifiable. The triple repetition of "and," in the fourth sentence, is awkward. "Notorious crimes

and follies," would express all that is implied in "crimes and follies which had attained a scandalous publicity." The fifth sentence might be well curtailed; and as it stands, has an unintentional and unpleasant sneer. "Intellect" would do as well as "intellectual powers"; and this (the sixth) sentence might otherwise be shortened advantageously. The whole paragraph, in my opinion, would be better thus expressed:

In Lord Byron's rank, understanding, character —even in his person—we find a strange union of extremes. Whatever men covet and admire, became his by right of birth; yet debasement and misery were mingled with each of his eminent advantages. He sprang from a house, ancient it is true, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of notorious crimes. But for merciful judges, the pauper kinsman whom he succeeded would have been hanged. The young peer had an intellect great, perhaps, yet partially unsound. His heart was generous, but his temper wayward; and while statuaries copied his head, beggars mimicked the deformity of his foot.

In these remarks, my object is not so much to point out inaccuracies in the most accurate stylist of his age, as to hint that our critics might surpass him on his own ground, and yet leave themselves something to learn in the moralities of manner.

Nothing can be plainer than that our position, as a literary colony of Great Britain, leads us into wronging, indirectly, our own authors by exaggerating the merits of those across the water. Our most reliable critics extol—and extol without discrimination—such English compositions as, if written in America, would be either passed over without notice or unscrupulously condemned. Mr.

Whipple, for example, whom I have mentioned in this connexion with Mr. Jones, is decidedly one of our most "reliable" critics. His honesty I dispute as little as I doubt his courage or his talents—but here is an instance of the want of common discrimination into which he is occasionally hurried, by undue reverence for British intellect and British opinion. In a review of "The Drama of Exile and other Poems," by Miss Barrett, (now Mrs. Browning, he speaks of the following passage as "in every respect faultless—sublime?"

> Hear the steep generations how they fall
> Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
> Like supernatural thunders—far yet near,
> Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills!

Now here, saying nothing of the affectation in "adown"; not alluding to the insoluble paradox of "far yet near"; not mentioning the inconsistent metaphor involved in the sowing of fiery echoes; adverting but slightly to the misusage of "like" in place of "as"; and to the impropriety of making anything fall like *thunder*, which has never been known to fall at all; merely hinting, too, at the misapplication of "steep" to the "generations" instead of to the "stairs"—(a perversion in no degree justified by the fact that so preposterous a figure as *synecdoche* exists in the school-books:)—letting these things pass, we shall still find it difficult to understand how Mrs. Browning should have been led to think the principal idea itself—the abstract idea—the idea of *tumbling down stairs*, in any shape, or under any circumstance—either a poetical or a decorous conception. And yet Mr. Whipple speaks of it as "sublime." That the lines narrowly *missed* sublimity, I grant:—that they came within

a step of it, I admit; but, unhappily, the step is that *one* step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the sublime and the ridiculous. So true is this that any person—that even I—with a very partial modification of the imagery—a modification that shall not interfere with its richly spiritual *tone*—may elevate the passage into unexceptionability. For example:

> Hear the far generations—how they crash
> From crag to crag down the precipitous Time,
> In multitudinous thunders that upstartle
> Aghast, the echoes from their cavernous lairs
> In the visionary hills!

No doubt my version has its faults; but it has at least the merit of consistency. Not only is a mountain more poetical than a pair of stairs, but echoes are more appropriately typified as wild beasts than as seeds; and echoes and wild beasts agree better with a mountain than does a pair of stairs with the *sowing* of seeds—even admitting that these seeds be seeds of fire, and be sown broadcast "among the hills" by a steep generation while in the act of tumbling down the stairs—that is to say, of coming down the stairs in too great a hurry to be capable of sowing the seeds as accurately as all seeds should be sown:—nor is the matter rendered any better for Mrs. Browning, even if the construction of her sentence be understood as implying that the fiery seeds were sown, not immediately by the steep generations that tumbled down the stairs, but mediately, through the intervention of the "supernatural thunders" that were *occasioned* by the steep generations that were so unlucky as to tumble down the stairs.

J. FENIMORE COOPER

"WYANDOTTE, or The Hutted Knoll," is, in its general features, precisely similar to the novels enumerated in the title.* It is a forest subject; and, when we say this, we give assurance that the story is a good one; for Mr. Cooper has never been known to fail, either in the forest or upon the sea. The interest, as usual, has no reference to *plot*, of which, indeed, our novelist seems altogether regardless, or incapable, but depends, first upon the nature of the theme; secondly, upon a Robinson-Crusoe-like detail in its management; and thirdly, upon the frequently repeated portraiture of the half-civilized Indian. In saying that the interest depends, *first*, upon the nature of the theme, we mean to suggest that this theme—life in the wilderness—is one of intrinsic and universal interest, appealing to the heart of man in all phases; a theme, like that of life upon the ocean, so unfailingly omniprevalent in its power of arresting and absorbing attention, that while success or popularity is, with a subject, expected as a matter of course, a failure might be properly regarded as conclusive evidence of imbecility on the part of the author. The two theses in question have been handled *usque ad nauseam*—and this through the instinctive perception of the universal interest which appertains to them. A writer, distrustful of his

* Wyandotté, or the Hutted Knoll. A tale, by the author of "The Path-finder," "Deerslayer," "Last of the Mohicans," "Pioneers," "Prairie," &c. &c. Philadelphia, Lea & Blanchard.

powers, can scarcely do better than discuss either one or the other. A man of genius will rarely, and should never, undertake, either; first, because both are excessively hackneyed; and, secondly, because the reader never fails, in forming his opinion of a book, to make discount, either wittingly or unwittingly, for that intrinsic interest which is inseparable from the subject and independent of the manner in which it is treated. Very few and very dull indeed are those who do not instantaneously perceive the distinction; and thus there are two great classes of fictions—a popular and widely circulated class, read with pleasure, but without admiration—in which the author is lost or forgotten; or remembered, if at all, with something very nearly akin to contempt; and then, a class not so popular, nor so widely diffused, in which, at every paragraph, arises a distinctive and highly pleasurable interest, springing from our perception and appreciation of the skill employed, or the genius evinced in the composition. After perusal of the one class, we think solely of the book—after reading the other, chiefly of the author. The former class leads to popularity—the latter to fame. In the former case, the books sometimes live, while the authors usually die; in the latter, even when the works perish, the man survives. Among American writers of the less generally circulated, but more worthy and more artistical fictions, we may mention Mr. Brockden Brown, Mr. John Neal, Mr. Simms, Mr. Hawthorne; at the head of the more popular division we may place Mr. Cooper.

"The Hutted Knoll," without pretending to detail facts, gives a narrative of fictitious events, similar, in nearly all respects, to occurrences which actually happened during the opening scenes of the Revolution, and at other epochs of our history. It

pictures the dangers, difficulties, and distresses of a large family, living, completely insulated, in the forest. The tale commences with a description of the "region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson, extending as far south as the line of Pennsylvania, and west to the verge of that vast rolling plain which composes Western New York"—a region of which the novelist has already frequently written, and the whole of which, with a trivial exception, was a wilderness before the Revolution. Within this district, and on a creek running into the Unadilla, a certain Captain Willoughby purchases an estate or "patent," and there retires, with his family and dependents, to pass the close of his life in agricultural pursuits. He has been an officer in the British army, but, after serving many years, has sold his commission, and purchased one for his only son, Robert, who alone does not accompany the party into the forest. This party consists of the captain himself; his wife; his daughter, Beulah; an adopted daughter, Maud Meredith; an invalid sergeant, Joyce, who had served under the captain; a Presbyterian preacher, Mr. Woods; a Scotch mason, Jamie Allen; an Irish laborer, Michael O'Hearn; a Connecticut man, Joel Strides; four negroes, Old Plin and young Plin, Big Smash and little Smash; eight axe-men; a house-carpenter: a mill-wright, &c., &c. Besides these, a Tuscarora Indian called Nick, or *Wyandotté*, accompanies the expedition. This Indian, who figures largely in the story, and gives it its title, may be considered as the principal character—the one chiefly elaborated. He is an outcast from his tribe, has been known to Captain Willoughby for thirty years, and is a compound of all the good and bad qualities which made up the character of the half-civilized

Indian. He does not remain with the settlers; but appears and re-appears at intervals upon the scene.

Nearly the whole of the first volume is occupied with a detailed account of the estate purchased, (which is termed "The Hutted Knoll," from a natural mound upon which the principal house is built) and of the progressive arrangements and improvements. Toward the close of the volume the Revolution commences; and the party at the "Knoll" is besieged by a band of savages and "rebels," with whom an understanding exists, on the part of Joel Strides, the Yankee. This traitor, instigated by the hope of possessing Captain Willoughby's estate, should it be confiscated, brings about a series of defections from the party of the settlers, and finally, deserting himself, reduces the whole number to six or seven, capable of bearing arms. Captain Willoughby resolves, however, to defend his post. His son, at this juncture, pays him a clandestine visit, and, endeavoring to reconnoitre the position of the Indians, is made captive. The captain, in an attempt at rescue, is murdered by Wyandotté, whose vindictive passions had been aroused by ill-timed allusions, on the part of Willoughby, to floggings previously inflicted, by his orders, upon the Indian. Wyandotté, however, having satisfied his personal vengeance, is still the ally of the settlers. He guides Maud, who is beloved by Robert, to the hut in which the latter is confined, and effects his escape. Aroused by this escape, the Indians precipitate their attack upon the Knoll, which, through the previous treachery of Strides in ill-hanging a gate, is immediately carried. Mrs. Willoughby, Beulah, and others of the party, are killed. Maud is secreted and thus saved by Wyandotté. At the last moment, when all is apparently lost, a reinforcement appears, un-

der command of Evert Beekman, the husband of Beulah; and the completion of the massacre is prevented. Woods, the preacher, had left the Knoll, and made his way through the enemy, to inform Beekman of the dilemma of his friends. Maud and Robert Willoughby are, of course, happily married. The concluding scene of the novel shows us Wyandotté repenting the murder of Willoughby, and converted to Christianity through the agency of Woods.

It will be at once seen that there is nothing *original* in this story. On the contrary, it is even excessively common-place. The lover, for example, rescued from captivity by the mistress; the Knoll carried through the treachery of an inmate; and the salvation of the besieged, at the very last moment, by a reinforcement arriving, in consequence of a message borne to a friend by one of the besieged, without the cognizance of the others; these, we say, are incidents which have been the common property of every novelist since the invention of letters. And as for *plot*, there has been no attempt at anything of the kind. The tale is a mere succession of events, scarcely any one of which has any necessary dependence upon any one other. Plot, however, is at best, an artificial effect, requiring, like music, not only a natural bias, but long cultivation of taste for its full appreciation; some of the finest narratives in the world—"Gil-Blas" and "Robinson Crusoe" for example—have been written without its employment; and "The Hutted Knoll," like all the sea and forest novels of Cooper, has been made deeply interesting, although depending upon this peculiar source of interest not at all. Thus the absence of plot can never be critically regarded as a *defect;* although its judicious use, in all cases aiding and in no case in-

juring other effects, must be regarded as of a very high order of merit.

There are one or two points, however, in the mere *conduct* of the story now before us, which may, perhaps, be considered as defective. For instance, there is too much *obviousness* in all that appertains to the hanging of the large gate. In more than a dozen instances, Mrs. Willoughby is made to allude to the delay in the hanging; so that the reader is too positively and pointedly forced to perceive that this delay is to result in the capture of the Knoll. As we are never in doubt of the fact, we feel diminished interest when it actually happens. A single vague allusion, well managed, would have been in the true artistical spirit.

Again: we see too plainly, from the first, that Beekman is to marry Beulah, and that Robert Willoughby is to marry Maud. The killing of Beulah, of Mrs. Willoughby, and Jamie Allen, produces, too, a painful impression, which does not properly appertain to the right fiction. Their deaths affect us as revolting and supererogatory; since the purposes of the story are not thereby furthered in any regard. To Willoughby's murder, however distressing, the reader makes no similar objection; merely because in his decease is fulfilled a species of poetical justice. We may observe here, nevertheless, that his repeated references to his flogging the Indian seem unnatural, because we have otherwise no reason to think him a fool, or a madman, and these references, under the circumstances, are absolutely insensate. We object, also, to the manner in which the general interest is dragged out, or suspended. The besieging party is kept before the Knoll so long, while so little is done, and so many opportunities of action are lost, that the reader takes it for granted that nothing

of consequence will occur—that the besieged will be finally delivered. He gets so accustomed to the presence of danger that its excitement at length departs. The action is not sufficiently rapid. There is too much procrastination. There is too much mere talk for talk's sake. The interminable discussions between Woods and Captain Willoughby are, perbaps, the worst feature of the book, for they have not even the merit of referring to the matters on hand. In general, there is quite too much colloquy for the purpose of manifesting character, and too little for the explanation of motive. The characters of the drama would have been better made out by action; while the motives to action, the reasons for the different courses of conduct adopted by the *dramatis personæ*, might have been made to proceed more satisfactorily from their own mouths, in casual conversations, than from that of the author in person. To conclude our remarks upon the head of ill-conduct in the story, we may mention occasional incidents of the merest melodramatic absurdity; as, for example, at page 156, of the second volume, where "Willoughby had an arm around the waist of Maud, and bore her forward with a rapidity to which her own strength was entirely unequal." We may be permitted to doubt whether a young lady, of sound health and limbs, exists, within the limits of Christendom, who could not run faster, on her own proper feet, for any considerable distance, than she could be carried upon *one arm* of either the Cretan Milo or of the Hercules Farnese.

On the other hand, it would be easy to designate many particulars which are admirably handled. The love of Maud Meredith for Robert Willoughby is painted with exquisite skill and truth. The incident of the tress of hair and box is naturally and effect-

ively conceived. A fine collateral interest is thrown over the whole narrative by the connexion of the theme with that of the Revolution; and, especially, there is an excellent dramatic point, at page 124 of the second volume, where Wyandotté, remembering the stripes inflicted upon him by Captain Willoughby, is about to betray him to his foes, when his purpose is arrested by a casual glimpse, through the forest, of the hut which contains Mrs. Willoughby, who had preserved the life of the Indian, by inoculation for the small-pox.

In the depicting of character, Mr. Cooper has been unusually successful in "Wyandotté." One or two of his personages, to be sure, must be regarded as little worth. Robert Willoughby, like most novel heroes, is a nobody; that is to say, there is nothing about him which may be looked upon as distinctive. Perhaps he is rather silly than otherwise; as, for instance, when he confuses all his father's arrangements for his concealment, and bursts into the room before Strides—afterward insisting upon accompanying that person to the Indian encampment, without any possible or impossible object. Woods, the parson, is a sad bore, upon the Dominie Sampson plan, and is, moreover, caricatured. Of Captain Willoughby we have already spoken—he is too often on stilts. Evert Beekman and Beulah are merely episodical. Joyce is nothing in the world but Corporal Trim—or, rather, Corporal Trim and water. Jamie Allen, with his prate about Catholicism, is insufferable. But Mrs. Willoughby, the humble, shrinking, womanly wife, whose whole existence centres in her affections, is worthy of Mr. Cooper. Maud Meredith is still better. In fact, we know no female portraiture, even in Scott, which surpasses her; and yet the world has been given to understand, by the enemies

of the novelist, that he is incapable of depicting a woman. Joel Strides will be recognised by all who are conversant with his general prototypes of Connecticut. Michael O'Hearn, the County Leitrim man, is an Irishman all over, and his portraiture abounds in humor; as, for example, at page 31, of the first volume, where he has a difficulty with a skiff, not being able to account for its revolving upon its own axis, instead of moving forward! or, at page 132, where, during divine service, to exclude at least a portion of the heretical doctrine, he stops *one* of his ears with his thumb; or, at page 195, where a passage occurs so much to our purpose that we will be pardoned for quoting it in full. Captain Willoughby is drawing his son up through a window, from his enemies below. The assistants, placed at a distance from this window to avoid observation from without, are ignorant of what burthen is at the end of the rope:

> The men did as ordered, raising their load from the ground a foot or two at a time. In this manner the burthen approached, yard after yard, until it was evidently drawing near the window.
>
> "It's the captain hoisting up the big baste of a hog, for provisioning the hoose again a saige," whispered Mike to the negroes, who grinned as they tugged; "and, when the craitur squails, see to it, that ye do not squail yourselves." At that moment the head and shoulders of a man appeared at the window. Mike let go the rope, seized a chair, and was about to knock the intruder upon the head; but the captain arrested the blow.
>
> "It's one o' the vagabone Injins that has undermined the hog and come up in its stead," roared Mike.
>
> "It's my son," said the captain; "see that you are silent and secret."

The negroes are, without exception, admirably drawn. The Indian, Wyandotté, however, is the great feature of the book, and is, in every respect,

equal to the previous Indian creations of the author of "The Pioneer." Indeed, we think this "forest gentleman" superior to the other noted heroes of his kind—the heroes which have been immortalized by our novelist. His keen sense of the distinction, in his own character, between the chief, Wyandotté, and the drunken vagabond, Sassy Nick; his chivalrous delicacy toward Maud, in never disclosing to her that knowledge of her real feelings toward Robert Willoughby, which his own Indian intuition had discovered; his enduring animosity toward Captain Willoughby, softened, and for thirty years delayed, through his gratitude to the wife; and then, the vengeance consummated, his pity for that wife conflicting with his exultation at the deed—these, we say, are all traits of a lofty excellence indeed. Perhaps the most effective passage in the book, and that which, most distinctively, brings out the character of the Tuscarora, is to be found at pages 50, 51, 52 and 53 of the second volume, where, for some trivial misdemeanor, the captain threatens to make use of the whip. The manner in which the Indian *harps* upon the threat, returning to it again and again, in every variety of phrase, forms one of the finest pieces of mere character-painting with which we have any acquaintance.

The most obvious and most unaccountable faults of "The Hutted Knoll," are those which appertain to the *style*—to the mere grammatical construction; —for, in other and more important particulars of style, Mr. Cooper, of late days, has made a very manifest improvement. His sentences, however, are arranged with an awkwardness so remarkable as to be matter of absolute astonishment, when we consider the education of the author, and his long and continual practice with the pen. In minute descriptions

of localities, any verbal inaccuracy, or confusion, becomes a source of vexation and misunderstanding, detracting very much from the pleasure of perusal; and in these inaccuracies "Wyandotté" abounds. Although, for instance, we carefully read and re-read that portion of the narrative which details the situation of the Knoll, and the construction of the buildings and walls about it, we were forced to proceed with the story without any exact or definite impressions upon the subject. Similar difficulties, from similar causes, occur *passim* throughout the book. For example: at page 41, vol. I.:

"The Indian gazed at the house, with that fierce intentness which sometimes glared, in a manner that had got to be, in its ordinary aspects, dull and besotted." This it is utterly impossible to comprehend. We presume, however, the intention is to say that although the Indian's ordinary manner (of gazing) had "got to be" dull and besotted, he occasionally gazed with an intentness that glared, and that he did so in the instance in question. The "got to be" is atrocious—the whole sentence no less so.

Here at page 9, vol. I., is something excessively vague: "Of the latter character is the face of most of that region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson," &c., &c. The Mohawk, joining the Hudson, forms *two* angles, of course,—an acute and an obtuse one; and, without farther explanation, it is difficult to say which is intended.

At page 55, vol. I., we read:—"The captain, owing to his English education, had avoided straight lines, and formal paths; giving to the little spot the improvement on nature which is a consequence of embellishing her works without destroying them. On

each side of this lawn was an orchard, thrifty and young, and which *were* already beginning to show signs of putting forth their blossoms." Here we are tautologically informed that improvement is a consequence of embellishment, and supererogatorily told that the rule holds good only where the embellishment is not accompanied by destruction. Upon the "each orchard *were*" it is needless to comment.

At page 30, vol. I., is something similar, where Strides is represented as "never doing anything that required a particle more than the exertion and strength that were absolutely necessary to effect his object." Did Mr. C. ever hear of any labor that *required* more exertion than was *necessary?* He means to say that Strides exerted himself no farther than was necessary—that's all.

At page 59, vol. I., we find this sentence—"He was advancing by the only road that was ever travelled by the stranger as he approached the Hut; or, he came up the valley." This is merely a vagueness of speech. "Or" is intended to imply "that is to say." The whole would be clearer thus—"He was advancing by the valley—the only road travelled by a stranger approaching the Hut." We have here sixteen words, instead of Mr. Cooper's twenty-five.

At page 8, vol. II., is an unpardonable awkwardness, although an awkwardness strictly grammatical. "I was a favorite, I believe, with, certainly was much petted by, both." Upon this we need make no farther observation. It speaks for itself.

We are aware, however, that there is a certain air of unfairness, in thus quoting detached passages, for animadversion of this kind; for, however strictly at random our quotations may really be, we have, of course, no means of proving the fact to our readers; and there are *no* authors, from whose works individual

inaccurate sentences may not be culled. But we mean to say that Mr. Cooper, no doubt through haste or neglect, is *remarkably* and *especially* inaccurate, as a general rule; and, by way of demonstrating this assertion, we will dismiss our extracts at random, and discuss some entire page of his composition. More than this: we will endeavor to select that particular page upon which it might naturally be supposed he would bestow the most careful attention. The reader will say at once— "Let this be his *first* page—the first page of his Preface." This page, then, shall be taken of course.

The history of the borders is filled with legends of the sufferings of isolated families, during the troubled scenes of colonial warfare. Those which we now offer to the reader, are distinctive in many of their leading facts, if not rigidly true in the details. The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction.

"*Abounds* with legends," would be better than "is filled with legends"; for it is clear that if the history were *filled* with legends, it would be all legend and no history. The word "of," too, occurs, in the first sentence, with an unpleasant frequency. The "*those*" commencing the second sentence, grammatically refers to the noun "scenes," immediately preceding, but is intended for "legends." The adjective "*distinctive*" is vaguely and altogether improperly employed. Mr. C., we believe, means to say, merely, that although the details of his legends may not be strictly true, facts similar to his leading ones have actually occurred. By use of the word "*distinctive*," however, he has contrived to convey a meaning nearly converse. In saying that his legend is "*distinctive*" in many of the leading facts, he has said what he, clearly, did not wish to say—viz: that his legend contained facts which distinguished

it from all other legends—in other words, facts never before discussed in other legends, and belonging peculiarly to his own. That Mr. C. *did* mean what we suppose, is rendered evident by the third sentence—"The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction." This third sentence itself, however, is very badly constructed. "The first" can refer, grammatically, only to "facts"; but no such reference is intended. If we ask the question—what is meant by "the first?"—*what* "alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction?"—the natural reply is "that facts similar to the leading ones have actually happened." The circumstance is alone to be cared for—this consideration "alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction."

"One of the misfortunes of a nation is to hear nothing besides its own praises." This is the fourth sentence, and is by no means lucid. The design is to say that individuals composing a nation, and living altogether within the national bounds, hear from each other only praises of the nation, and that this is a misfortune to the individuals, since it misleads them in regard to the actual condition of the nation. Here it will be seen that, to convey the intended idea, we have been forced to make distinction between the nation and its individual members; for it is evident that a nation is considered as such only in reference to other nations; and thus *as a nation*, it hears *very* much "besides its own praises"; that is to say, it hears the detractions of other rival nations. In endeavoring to compel his meaning within the compass of a brief sentence, Mr. Cooper has completely sacrificed its intelligibility.

The fifth sentence runs thus:—"Although the American Revolution was probably as just an effort as was ever made by a people to resist the first in-

roads of oppression, the cause had its evil aspects, as well as all other human struggles."

The American Revolution is here improperly called an "effort." The effort was the cause, of which the Revolution was the result. A rebellion is an "effort" to effect a revolution. An "inroad of oppression" involves an untrue metaphor; for "inroad" appertains to aggression, to attack, to active assault. "The cause had its evil aspects as well as all other human struggles," implies that the cause had not only its evil aspects, but had, also, all other human struggles. If the words must be retained at all, they should be thus arranged—"The cause like [for as well as] all other human struggles, had its evil aspects"; or better thus—"The cause had its evil aspect, as have all human struggles." "Other" is superfluous.

The sixth sentence is thus written;—"We have been so much accustomed to hear everything extolled, of late years, that could be dragged into the remotest connexion with that great event, and the principles which led to it, that there is danger of overlooking truth in a pseudo patriotism." The "of late years," here, should follow the "accustomed," or precede the "We have been"; and the Greek "pseudo" is objectionable, since its exact equivalent is to be found in the English "false." "Spurious" would be better, perhaps, than either.

Inadvertences such as these sadly disfigure the style of "The Hutted Knoll"; and every true friend of its author must regret his inattention to the minor morals of the Muse. But these "minor morals," it may be said, are trifles at best. Perhaps so. At all events, we should never have thought of dwelling so pertinaciously upon the unessential demerits of "Wyandotté," could we have discovered any more momentous upon which to comment.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT*

"A WELL-BRED *man*," says Sir James Puckle, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," "will never give himself the liberty to speak ill of women." We emphasize the "man." Setting aside, for the present, certain rare commentators and compilers of the species——creatures neither precisely men, women, nor Mary Wollstonecraft's—setting these aside as unclassifiable, we may observe that the race of critics are masculine—men. With the exception, perhaps, of Mrs. Anne Royal, we can call to mind no female who has occupied, even temporarily, the Zoilus throne. And this, the Salic law, is an evil; for the inherent chivalry of the critical *man* renders it not only an unpleasant task to him "to speak ill of a woman," (and a woman and her book are identical,) but an almost impossible task not to laud her *ad nauseam*. In general, therefore, it is the unhappy lot of the authoress to be subjected, time after time, to the downright degradation of mere puffery. On her own side of the Atlantic, Miss Barrett has indeed, in one instance at least, escaped the infliction of this lamentable contumely and wrong; but if she had been really solicitous of its infliction in America, she could not have adopted a more effectual plan than that of saying a few words about "the great American people," in an American edition of her work, published under the superin-

* The Drama of Exile, and other Poems: By Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, Author of "The Seraphim," and other Poems.

tendence of an American author.* Of the innumerable "native" notices of "The Drama of Exile," which have come under our observation, we can call to mind *not one* in which there is anything more remarkable than the critic's dogged determination to find *nothing* barren, from Beersheba to Dan. Another in the "Democratic Review" has proceeded so far, it is true, as to venture a *very* delicate insinuation to the effect that the poetess "will not fail to speak her mind *though it bring upon her a bad rhyme*"; beyond this, nobody has proceeded: and as for the elaborate paper in the new Whig Monthly, all that anybody can say or think, and all that Miss Barrett can *feel* respecting it is, that it is an eulogy as well written as it is an insult well intended. Now of all the friends of the fair author, we doubt whether one exists, with more profound—with more enthusiastic reverence and admiration of her genius, than the writer of these words. And it is for this very reason, beyond all others, that he intends to speak of her *the truth*. Our chief regret is, nevertheless, that the limits of this work will preclude the possibility of our speaking this truth so fully, and so much in detail, as we could wish. By far the most valuable criticism that we, or that any one could give of the volumes now lying before us, would be the quotation of three-fourths of their contents. But we have this advan-

* We are sorry to notice, in the American edition, a multitude of typographical errors, many of which affect the sense, and should therefore be corrected in a second impression, if called for. How far they are chargeable to the London copy, we are not prepared to say. "Froze," for instance, is printed "frore." "Foregone," throughout, is printed "forgone." "Wordless" is printed "worldless"—"worldly," "wordly"—"spilt," "split," etc., etc.,— while transpositions, false accents, and mis-punctuations abound. We indicate a few pages on which such inadvertences are to be discovered. Vol. 1–23, 26, 37, 45, 53, 56, 80, 166, 174, 180, 185, 251. Vol. 2–109, 114, 240, 247, 253, 272.

tage—that the work has been long published, and almost universally read—and thus, in some measure, we may proceed, concisely, as if the text of our context, were an understood thing.

In her preface to this, the "American edition" of her late poems, Miss Barrett, speaking of the Drama of Exile, says:—"I decided on publishing it, after considerable hesitation and doubt. Its subject rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the compositional excitement had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My own object was the new and strange experiment of the fallen Humanity, as it went forth from Paradise in the Wilderness, with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of being the organ of the Fall to her offence, appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than by a man." In this abstract announcement of the theme, it is difficult to understand the ground of the poet's hesitation to publish; for the theme in itself seems admirably adapted to the purposes of the closest drama. The poet, nevertheless, is, very properly, conscious of failure—a failure which occurs not in the general, but in the particular conception, and which must be placed to the account of "the model of the Greek tragedies." The Greek tragedies *had* and even *have* high merits; but we act wisely in now substituting for the external and typified human sympathy of the antique Chorus, a direct, internal, living and moving sympathy itself; and although Æschylus might have done service as "a model," to either Euripides or Sophocles, yet were Sophocles and

Euripides in London to-day, they would, perhaps, while granting a certain formless and shadowy grandeur, indulge a quiet smile at the shallowness and uncouthness of that Art, which, in the old amphitheatres, had beguiled them into applause of the Œdipus at Colonos.

It would have been better for Miss Barrett if, throwing herself independently upon her own very extraordinary resources, and forgetting that a Greek had ever lived, she had involved her Eve in a series of adventures merely natural, or if not this, of adventures preternatural within the limits of at least a conceivable relation—a relation of matter to spirit and spirit to matter, that should have left room for something like palpable action and comprehensible emotion—that should not have utterly precluded the development of that womanly character which is admitted as the principal object of the poem. As the case actually stands, it is only in a few snatches of verbal intercommunication with Adam and Lucifer, that we behold her as a woman at all. For the rest, she is a mystical something or nothing, enwrapped in a fog of rhapsody about Transfiguration, and the Seed, and the Bruising of the Heel, and other talk of a nature that no man ever pretended to understand in plain prose, and which, when solar-microscoped into poetry "upon the model of the Greek drama," is about as convincing as the Egyptian Lectures of Mr. Silk Buckingham—about as much to any purpose under the sun as the *hi presto!* conjurations of Signor Blitz. What are we to make, for example, of dramatic colloquy such as this?—the words are those of a Chorus of Invisible Angels addressing Adam:

Live, work on, O Earthy!
By the Actual's tension
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension.
From the low earth round you
Reach the heights above you;
From the stripes that wound you
Seek the loves that love you!
God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

Now we do not mean to assert that, by excessive "tension" of the intellect, a reader accustomed to the cant of the transcendentalists (or of those who degrade an ennobling philosophy by styling themselves such) may not succeed in ferretting from the passage quoted, and indeed from each of the thousand similar ones throughout the book, something that shall bear the aspect of an absolute idea—but we do mean to say, first, that in nine cases out of ten, the thought when dug out will be found very poorly to repay the labor of the digging;—for it is the nature of thought in general, as it is the nature of some ores in particular, to be richest when most superficial. And we do mean to say, secondly, that, in nineteen cases out of twenty, the reader will suffer the most valuable ore to remain unmined to all eternity, before he will be put to the trouble of digging for it one inch. And we do mean to assert, thirdly, that no reader is to be condemned for *not* putting himself to the trouble of digging even the one inch; for no writer has the right to impose any such necessity upon him. What is worth thinking is distinctly thought: what is distinctly thought, can and should be distinctly expressed, or should not be expressed at all. Nevertheless, there is no more appropriate opportunity than the present for admit-

ting and maintaining, at once, what has never before been either maintained or admitted—that there is a justifiable exception to the rule for which we contend. It is where the design is to convey the fantastic—not the obscure. To give the idea of the latter we need, as in general, the most precise and definitive terms, and those who employ other terms but confound obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. The fantastic in itself, however,—phantasm—may be materially furthered in its development by the *quaint* in phraseology:—a proposition which any moralist may examine at his leisure for himself.

The "Drama of Exile" opens with a very palpable *bull:*—"Scene, the outer side of the gate of Eden, shut fast with clouds"—[a scene out of sight!]—"from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire, self-moved. A watch of innumerable angels rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith; and the glare cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness. Adam and Eve are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The angel Gabriel and Lucifer are beside the gate."—These are the "stage directions" which greet us on the threshold of the book. We complain first of the bull: secondly, of the blue-fire melo-dramatic aspect of the revolving sword; thirdly, of the duplicate nature of the sword, which, if steel, and sufficiently inflamed to do service in burning, would, perhaps, have been in no temper to cut; and on the other hand, if sufficiently cool to have an edge, would have accomplished little in the way of scorching a personage so well accustomed to fire and brimstone and all that, as we have very good reason to believe Lucifer was. We cannot help objecting, too, to the "innumerable angels,"

as a force altogether disproportioned to the one enemy to be kept out: either the self-moving sword itself, we think, or the angel Gabriel alone, or five or six of the "innumerable" angels, would have sufficed to keep the devil (or is it Adam?) outside of the gate—which, after all, he might not have been able to discover, on account of the clouds.

Far be it from us, however, to dwell irreverently on matters which have venerability in the faith or in the fancy of Miss Barrett. We allude to these *niäiseries* at all—found here in the very first paragraph of her poem,—simply by way of putting in the clearest light the mass of inconsistency and antagonism in which her *subject* has inextricably involved her. She has made allusion to Milton, and no doubt felt secure in her theme (as a theme merely) when she considered his "Paradise Lost." But even in Milton's own day, when men had the habit of believing all things, the more nonsensical the more readily, and of worshipping, in blind acquiescence, the most preposterous of impossibilities —even *then*, there were not wanting individuals who would have read the great epic with more zest, could it have been explained to their satisfaction, how and why it was, not only that a snake quoted Aristotle's ethics, and behaved otherwise pretty much as he pleased, but that bloody battles were continually being fought between bloodless "innumerable angels," that found no inconvenience in losing a wing one minute and a head the next, and if pounded up into puff-paste late in the afternoon, were as good "innumerable angels" as new the next morning, in time to be at *reveillé* roll-call: And now—at the present epoch—there are few people who do not occasionally *think*. This is emphatically the thinking age;—indeed it may very

well be questioned whether mankind ever substantially thought before. The fact is, if the "Paradise Lost" were written to-day (assuming that it had never been written when it was,) not even its eminent, although over-estimated merits, would counterbalance, either in the public view, or in the opinion of any critic at once intelligent and honest, the multitudinous incongruities which are part and parcel of its plot.

But in the plot of the drama of Miss Barrett it is something even worse than incongruity which affronts:—a continuous mystical strain of ill-fitting and exaggerated allegory—if, indeed, allegory is not much too respectable a term for it. We are called upon, for example, to sympathise in the whimsical woes of two Spirits, who, upspringing from the bowels of the earth, set immediately to bewailing their miseries in jargon such as this:

> I am the spirit of the harmless earth;
> God spake me softly out among the stars,
> As softly as a blessing of much worth—
> And then his smile did follow unawares,
> That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
> Might shine anointed with his chrism of beauty—
> Yet I wail!
> I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
> Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
> Individual aspect and complexity
> Of gyratory orb and interval,
> Lost in the fluent motion of delight
> Toward the high ends of Being, beyond Sight—
> Yet I wail!

Innumerable other spirits discourse successively after the same fashion, each ending every stanza of his lamentation with the "yet I wail!" When at length they have fairly made an end, Eve touches Adam upon the elbow, and hazards, also, the pro-

found and pathetic observation—"Lo, Adam, they wail!"—which is nothing more than the simple truth—for they *do*—and God deliver us from any such wailing again!

It is not our purpose, however, to demonstrate what every reader of these volumes will have readily seen self-demonstrated—the utter indefensibility of "The Drama of Exile," considered uniquely, as a work of art. We have none of us to be told that a medley of metaphysical recitatives sung out of tune, at Adam and Eve, by all manner of inconceivable abstractions, is not exactly the best material for a poem. Still it may very well happen that among this material there shall be individual passages of great beauty. But should any one doubt the possibility, let him be satisfied by a single extract such as follows:

> On a mountain peak
> Half sheathed in primal woods and glittering
> In *spasms of awful sunshine*, at that hour
> A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
> *With his calm massive face turned full on thine,*
> *And his mane listening.* When the ended curse
> Left silence in the world, right suddenly
> He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
> *As if the new reality of death*
> *Were dashed against his eyes*,—and roared so fierce,
> (*Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat*
> *Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear*)—
> And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
> Such *fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales*
> *To distant silence*,—that the forest beasts,
> One after one, did mutter a response
> In savage and in sorrowful complaint
> *Which trailed along the gorges.*

There is an Homeric force here—a vivid picturesqueness which all men will appreciate and admire.

It is, however, the longest quotable passage in the drama, not disfigured with blemishes of importance; —although there are many—very many passages of a far loftier order of excellence, so disfigured, and which, therefore, it would not suit our immediate purpose to extract. The truth is,—and it may be as well mentioned at this point as elsewhere—that we are not to look in Miss Barrett's works for any examples of what has been occasionally termed "sustained effort"; for neither are there, in any of her poems, any long commendable paragraphs, nor are there any individual compositions which will bear the slightest examination as consistent Art-products. Her wild and magnificent genius seems to have contented itself with points—to have exhausted itself in flashes;—but it is the profusion—the unparalled number and close propinquity of these points and flashes which render her book *one flame*, and justify us in calling her, unhesitatingly, the greatest—the most glorious of her sex.

The "Drama of Exile" calls for little more, in the way of comment, than what we have generally said. Its finest particular feature is, perhaps, the rapture of Eve—rapture bursting through despair—upon discovering that she still possesses in the unwavering love of Adam, an undreamed-of and priceless treasure. The poem ends, as it commences, with a bull. The last sentence gives us to understand that "there is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel." How there can be sound during silence, and how an audience are to distinguish, by such sound, angel tears from any other species of tears, it may be as well, perhaps, not too particularly to inquire.

Next, in length, to the Drama is, "The Vision of Poets." We object to the didacticism of its design,

which the poetess thus states: "I have attempted to express here my view of the mission of the veritable poet—of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the uses of sorrow suffered in it, of the great work accomplished in it through suffering, and of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called '*la patience angelique du génie.*'" This "view" may be correct, but neither its correctness nor its falsity has anything to do with a poem. If a thesis is to be demonstrated, we need *prose* for its demonstration. In this instance, so far as the allegorical instruction and argumentation are lost sight of, in the upper current—so far as the main admitted intention of the work is kept out of view—so far only is the work a poem, and so far only is the poem worth notice, or worthy of its author. Apart from its poetical character, the composition is thoughtful, vivid, epigrammatic, and abundant in just observation—although the critical opinions introduced are not always our own. A reviewer in "Blackwood's Magazine," quoting many of these critical portraits, takes occasion to find fault with the grammar of this tristich:

> Here Æschylus—the women swooned
> To see so awful when he frowned
> As the God's did—he standeth crowned.

"What on earth," says the critic, "are we to make of the words 'the women swooned to see so awful'? . . . .The syntax will punish future commentators as much as some of his own corrupt choruses." In general, we are happy to agree with this reviewer, whose decisions respecting the book are, upon the whole, so nearly coincident with ours, that we hesitated, through fear of repetition, to undertake a *critique* at all, until we considered that

we might say a very great deal in simply supplying his omissions; but he frequently errs through mere hurry, and never did he err more singularly than at the point now in question. He evidently supposes that "awful" has been misused as an adverb and made referable to "women." But not so; and although the construction of the passage is unjustifiably involute, its grammar is intact. Disentangling the construction, we make this evident at once: "Here Æschylus (he) standeth crowned, (whom) the women swooned to see so awful, when he frowned as the God's did." The "he" is excessive, and the "whom" is understood. Respecting the lines,

> Euripides, with close and mild
> Scholastic lips, that could be wild,
> And laugh or sob out like a child
> Right in the classes,

the critic observes:—"'Right in the classes' throws our intellect completely upon its beam-ends." But, if so, the fault possibly lies in the crankness of the intellect; for the words themselves mean merely that Sophocles laughed or cried like a school-boy—like a child right (or just) in his classes—one who had not yet left school. The phrase is affected, we grant, but quite intelligible. A still more remarkable misapprehension occurs in regard to the triplet,

> And Goethe, with that reaching eye
> His soul reached out from, far and high,
> And fell from inner entity.

The reviewer's remarks upon this are too preposterous not to be quoted in full;—we doubt if any commentator of equal dignity ever so egregiously committed himself before. "Goethe," he says, "is a perfect enigma, what does the word 'fell' mean? δεινος we

suppose—that is, 'not to be trifled with.' But surely it sounds very strange, although it may be true enough, to say that his 'fellness' is occasioned by 'inner entity.' But perhaps the line has some deeper meaning which we are unable to fathom." Perhaps it has: and this is the criticism—the British criticism—the Blackwood criticism—to which we have so long implicitly bowed down! As before, Miss Barrett's verses are needlessly involved, but their meaning requires no Œdipus. Their construction is thus intended:—"And Goethe, with that reaching eye from which his soul reached out, far and high, and (in so reaching) fell from inner entity." The plain prose is this:—Goethe, (the poet would say,) in involving himself too far and too profoundly in external speculations—speculations concerning the world without him—neglected, or made miscalculations concerning his inner entity, or being,—concerning the world within. This idea is involved in the metaphor of a person leaning from a window so far that finally he falls from it—the person being the soul, the window the eye.

Of the twenty-eight "Sonnets," which immediately succeed the "Drama of Exile," and which receive the especial commendation of Blackwood, we have no very enthusiastic opinion. The *best* sonnet is objectionable from its extreme artificiality; and, to be effective, this species of composition requires a minute management—a well-controlled dexterity of touch—compatible neither with Miss Barrett's deficient constructiveness, nor with the fervid rush and whirl of her genius. Of the particular instances here given, we prefer "the Prisoner," of which the conclusion is particularly beautiful. In general, the themes are obtrusively metaphysical, or didactic.

"The Romaunt of the Page," an imitation of the old English ballad, is neither very original in subject, nor very skilfully put together. We speak comparatively, of course:—It is not very good—for Miss Barrett:—and what we have said of this poem will apply equally to a very similar production, "The Rhyme of the Dutchess May." The "Poet and the Bird"—"A Child Asleep"—"Crowned and Wedded"—"Crowned and Buried"—"To Flush my Dog"—"The Foor-fold Aspect"—"A Flower in a Letter"—"A Lay of the Early Rose"—"That Day"—"L. E. L.'s Questio"—"Catarina to Camoens"—"Wine of Cyprus"—"The Dead Pan"—"Sleeping and Watching"—"A Portrait"—"The Mournful Mother"—and "A Valediction"—although all burning with divine fire, manifested only in scintillations, have nothing in them idiosyncratic. "The House of Clouds" and "The Last Bower" are superlatively lovely, and show the vast powers of the poet in the field best adapted to their legitimate display:—the *themes*, here, could not be improved. The former poem is purely imaginative; the latter is unobjectionably because unobtrusively suggestive of a moral, and is, perhaps, upon the whole, the most admirable composition in the two volumes:—or, if it is not, then "The Lay of the Brown Rosarie" *is*. In this last the ballad-character is elevated—etherealized—and thus made to afford scope for an ideality at once the richest and most vigorous in the world. The peculiar foibles of the author are here too, dropped bodily, as a mantle, in the tumultuous movement and excitement of the narrative.

Miss Barrett has need only of *real* self-interest in her subjects, to do justice to her subjects and to herself. On the other hand, "A Rhapsody of Life's Progress," although gleaming with cold corrusca-

tions, is the least meritorious, because the most philosophical, effusion of the whole:—this, we say, in flat contradiction of the "*spoudiotaton kai philosophikotaton genos*" of Aristotle. "The Cry of the Human" is singularly effective, not more from the vigor and ghastly passion of its thought, than from the artistically-conceived *arabesquerie* of its rhythm. "The Cry of the Children," similar, although superior in tone and handling, is full of a nervous unflinching energy—a horror sublime in its simplicity—of which a far greater than Dante might have been proud. "Bertha in the Lane," a rich ballad, very singularly excepted from the wholesale commendation of the" Democratic Review," as "perhaps not one of the best," and designated by Blackwood, on the contrary, as "decidedly the finest poem of the collection," is *not* the *very* best, we think, only because mere pathos, however exquisite, cannot be ranked with the loftiest exhibitions of the ideal. Of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," the magazine last quoted observes that "some pith is put forth in its passionate parts." We will not pause to examine the delicacy or lucidity of the metaphor embraced in the "*putting forth* of some pith"; but unless by "some pith" itself, is intended the utmost conceivable intensity and vigor, then the critic is merely damning with faint praise. With the exception of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," we have never perused a poem combining so much of the fiercest passion with so much of the most ethereal fancy, as the "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," of Miss Barrett. We are forced to admit, however, that the latter work *is* a very palpable imitation of the former, which it surpasses in plot, or rather in thesis, as much as it falls below it in artistical management, and a certain

calm energy—lustrous and indomitable—such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold.

It is in the "Lady Geraldine" that the critic of Blackwood is again put at fault in the comprehension of a couple of passages. He confesses his inability "to make out the construction of the words, 'all that spirits pure and ardent are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to hold.'" There are comparatively few American school-boys who could not parse it. The prosaic construction would run thus:—all *that* (wealth understood) because chancing not to hold *which*, (or on account of not holding which) all pure and ardent spirits are cast out of love and reverence." The "which" is involved in the relative pronoun "that"—the second word of the sentence. *All that we know is, that Miss Barrett is right:*—here is a parallel phrase, meaning—"all that (which) we know," etc. The fact is, that the accusation of imperfect grammar would have been more safely, if more generally, urged: in descending to particular exceptions, the reviewer has been doing little more than exposing himself at all points.

Turning aside, however, from grammar, he declares his incapacity to fathom the meaning of

> She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-eagles
> *Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like hand—*
> With a thunderous vapor trailing underneath the starry vigils,
> So to mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her land.

Now it must be understood that he is profoundly serious in his declaration—he really *does not* apprehend the thought designed—and he is even more

than profoundly serious, too, in intending these his own comments upon his own stolidity, for wit:—"We thought that steam-coaches generally followed the directing of no hand except the stoker's, but *it*, certainly, is always much *liker* a raven than a dove." After this, who shall question the infallibility of Christopher North? We presume there are very few of *our* readers who will not easily appreciate the richly imaginative conception of the poetess:—The Lady Geraldine is supposed to be standing in her own door, (positively *not* on the top of an engine,) and thence pointing, "with her floating dove-like hand," to the lines of vapor, from the "resonant steam-eagles," that designate upon the "blasted heaven," the remote boundaries of her domain.—But, perhaps, we are guilty of a very gross absurdity ourselves, in commenting *at all* upon the whimsicalities of a reviewer who can deliberately *select* for special animadversion the second of the four verses we here copy:

> Eyes, he said, now throbbing through me! are ye
> eyes that did undo me?
> *Shining eyes like antique jewels set in Parian statue-*
> *stone!*
> Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever
> burning torrid
> O'er the desolate sand desert of my heart and life
> undone?

The ghost of the Great Frederick might, to be sure, quote at us, in his own Latin, his favorite adage, "De gustibus non est disputand*us*";—but, when we take into consideration the moral designed, the weirdness of effect intended, and the historical adaptation of the fact alluded to, in the line italicized, (a fact of which it is by no means impossible

that the critic is ignorant), we cannot refrain from expressing our conviction—and we here *express it* in the teeth of the whole horde of the Ambrosianians —that from the entire range of poetical literature there shall not, in a century, be produced a more sonorous—a more vigorous verse—a juster—a nobler —a more ideal—a more magnificent image—than this very image, in this very verse, which the most noted magazine of Europe has so especially and so contemptuously condemned.

"The Lady Geraldine" is, we think, the only poem of its author which is not deficient, considered as an artistical whole. Her constructive ability, as we have already suggested, is either not very remarkable, or has never been properly brought into play:—in truth, her genius is too impetuous for the minuter technicalities of that elaborate *Art* so needful in the building up of pyramids for immortality. This deficiency, then—if there be any such—is her chief weakness. Her other foibles, although some of them are, in fact, glaring, glare, nevertheless, to no very material ill purpose. There are none which she will not readily dismiss in her future works. She retains them now, perhaps, because unaware of their existence.

Her affections are unquestionably many, and generally inexcusable. We may, perhaps, tolerate such words as "blé," "chrysm," "nympholeptic," "œnomel," and "chrysopras"—they have at least the merit either of distinct meaning, or of terse and sonorous expression;—but what can be well said in defence of the unnecessary nonsense of "'ware" for "aware"—of "'bide," for "abide"—of "'gins," for "begins"—of "'las" for "alas"—of "oftly," "ofter," and "oftest," for "often," "more often," and "most often"—or of "erelong" in the sense of

"long ago"? That there is *authority* for the mere words proves nothing; those who employed them in their day would not employ them if writing *now*. Although we grant, too, that the poetess is very usually Homeric in her compounds, there is no intelligibility of construction, and therefore no force of meaning in "dew-pallid," "pale-passioned," and "silver-solemn." Neither have we any partiality for "drave" or "*su*preme," or "*la*ment;" and while upon this topic, we may as well observe that there are few readers who do anything but laugh or stare, at such phrases as "L. E. L.'s Last Questio"—"The Cry of the Human"—"Leaning from my Human"—"Heaven assist the human"—"the full sense of your mortal"—"a grave for your divine"—"falling off from our created"—"he sends this gage for thy pity's counting"—"they could not press their futures on the present of her courtesy"—or "could another fairer lack to thee, lack to thee?" There are few, at the same time, who do not feel disposed to weep outright, when they hear of such things as "Hope withdrawing her peradventure"—"spirits dealing in pathos of antithesis"—"angels in antagonism to God and his reflex beatitudes"—"songs of glories ruffling down doorways"—"God's possibles"—and "rules of Mandom."

We have already said, however, that mere *quaintness* within reasonable limit, is not only *not* to be regarded as affectation, but has its proper artistic uses in aiding a fantastic effect. We quote, from the lines "To my dog Flush," a passage in exemplification:

> Leap! thy broad tail waves a light!
> Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
> Canopied in fringes!

Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches!

And again—from the song of a tree-spirit, in the "Drama of Exile:"

The Divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,
In the sun-light greenly sifted,—
In the sun-light and the moon-light
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees,
In the night-light and the noon-light,
With a ruffling of green branches,
Shaded off to resonances,
Never stirred by rain or breeze.

The thoughts, here, belong to the highest order of poetry, but they could not have been wrought into effective expression, without the instrumentality of those repetitions—those unusual phrases—in a word, those *quaintnesses*, which it has been too long the fashion to censure, indiscriminately, under the one general head of "affectation." No true poet will fail to be enraptured with the two extracts above quoted—but we believe there are few who would not find a difficulty in reconciling the psychal impossibility of refraining from admiration, with the too-hastily attained mental conviction that, critically, there is nothing to admire.

Occasionally, we meet in Miss Barrett's poems a certain *farfetchedness* of imagery, which is reprehensible in the extreme. What, for example, are we to think of

Now he hears the angel voices
Folding silence in the room?—

undoubtedly, that it is nonsense, and no more; or of

> How the silence round you shivers
> While our voices through it go?—

again, unquestionably, that it is nonsense, and nothing beyond.

Sometimes we are startled by knotty paradoxes; and it is not acquitting their perpetrator of all blame on their account to admit that, in some instances, they are susceptible of solution. It is really difficult to discover anything for approbation, in enigmas such as

> That bright impassive, passive angel-hood,

or—

> The silence of my heart is full of sound.

At long intervals, we are annoyed by specimens of repulsive imagery, as where the children cry;

> How long, O cruel nation,
> Will you stand, to move the world, *on a child's heart—*
> *Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation?* etc.

Now and then, too, we are confounded by a pure platitude, as when Eve exclaims:

> Leave us not
> In agony beyond what we can bear,
> And in abasement *below thunder-mark!*

or, when the Savior is made to say:

> So, at last,
> He shall look round on you *with lids too straight*
> *To hold the grateful tears.*

"Strait" was, no doubt, intended, but does not materially elevate, although it slightly elucidates, the thought. A very remarkable passage is that, also, wherein Eve bids the infant voices

> Hear the steep generations, how they fall
> Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
> Like supernatural thunders—far yet near,
> Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills!

Here, saying nothing of the affectation in "adown"; not alluding to the insoluble paradox of "far yet near"; not mentioning the inconsistent metaphor involved in the "sowing of *fiery* echoes"; adverting but slightly to the misusage of "like," in place of "as," and to the impropriety of making any thing fall like *thunder*, which has never been known to fall at all; merely hinting, too, at the misapplication of "steep," to the "generations," instead of to the "stairs"—a perversion in no degree to be justified by the fact that so preposterous a figure as *synecdoche* exists in the school books;—letting these things pass, for the present, we shall still find it difficult to understand how Miss Barrett should have been led to think that the principal idea itself—the abstract idea—the idea of *tumbling down stairs*, in any shape, or under any circumstances —either a poetical or a decorous conception. And yet we have seen this very passage quoted as "sublime," by a critic who seems to take it for granted, as a general rule, that Nat-Leeism is the loftiest order of literary merit. That the lines very *narrowly missed* sublimity, we grant; that they came within a step of it, we admit;—but, unhappily, the step is that *one* step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the sublime and the ridiculous. So true is this, that any person—that even *we*—with a very partial modification of the imagery—a modification that shall not interfere with its richly spiritual *tone*—may elevate the quotation into unexceptionability. For example: and we offer it with profound deference—

> Hear the far generations—how they crash,
> From crag to crag, down the precipitous Time,
> In multitudinous thunders that upstartle,
> Aghast, the echoes from their cavernous lairs
> In the visionary hills!

We have no doubt that our version has its faults —but it has, at least, the merit of consistency. Not only is a mountain more poetical than a pair of stairs; but echoes are more appropriately typified as wild beasts than as seeds; and echoes and wild beasts agree better with a mountain, than does a pair of stairs with the *sowing* of seeds—even admitting that these seeds be seeds of fire, and be sown broadcast "among the hills," by a steep generation, while in the act of tumbling down the stairs—that is to say, of coming down the stairs—in too violent a hurry to be capable of sowing the seeds as accurately as all seeds should be sown; nor is the matter rendered any better for Miss Barrett, even if the construction of her sentence is to be understood as implying that the fiery seeds were sown, not immediately by the steep generations that tumbled down the stairs, but mediately, through the intervention of the "supernatural thunders" that were *occasioned* by the "steep generations" that tumbled down the stairs.

The poetess is not unfrequently guilty of repeating herself. The "thunder cloud veined by lightning" appears, for instance, on pages 34 of the first, and 228 of the second volume. The "silver clash of wings" is heard at pages 53 of the first, and 269 of the second; and angel tears are discovered to be falling as well at page 27, as at the conclusion of "The Drama of Exile." Steam, too, in the shape of Death's White Horse, comes upon the ground, both at page 244 of the first, and 179 of the second

volume—and there are multitudinous other repetitions, both of phrase and idea—but it is the excessive reiteration of pet *words* which is, perhaps, the most obtrusive of the minor errors of the poet. "Chrystalline," "Apocalypse," "foregone," "evangel," "'ware," "throb," "level," "loss," and the musical term "minor," are forever upon her lips. The chief favorites, however, are "down" and "leaning," which are echoed and re-echoed not only *ad infinitum*, but in every whimsical variation of import. As Miss Barrett certainly cannot be aware of the extent of this mannerism, we will venture to call her attention to a few—comparatively a *very* few examples.

Pealing *down* the depths of Godhead. . . .
Smiling *down*, as Venus *down* the waves. . . .
Smiling *down* the steep world very purely. . . .
Down the purple of this chamber. . . .
Moving *down* the hidden depths of loving. . . .
Cold the sun shines *down* the door. . . .
Which brought angels *down* our talk. . . .
Let your souls behind you *lean* gently moved. . . .
But angels *leaning* from the golden seats. . . .
And melancholy *leaning* out of heaven. . . .
And I know the heavens are *leaning* down. . . .
Then over the casement she *leaneth*. . . .
Forbear that dream, too near to heaven it *leaned*. . . .
I would *lean* my spirit o'er you. . . .
Thou, O sapient angel, *leanest o'er*. . . .
Shapes of brightness *overlean* thee. . . .
They are *leaning* their young heads. . . .
Out of heaven shall o'er you *lean*. . . .
While my spirit *leans* and reaches. . . .
etc., etc., etc.

In the matter of grammar, upon which the Edinburgh critic insists so pertinaciously, the author of "The Drama of Exile" seems to us even peculiarly without fault. The nature of her studies has no

doubt, imbued her with a very delicate instinct of constructive accuracy. The occasional use of phrases so questionable as "from whence" and the far-fetchedness and involution of which we have already spoken, are the only noticeable blemishes of an exceedingly chaste, vigorous, and comprehensive style.

In her inattention to rhythm, Mrs. Barrett is guilty of an error that might have been fatal to her fame—that *would* have been fatal to any reputation less solidly founded than her own. We do not allude, so particularly, to her multiplicity of inadmissible rhymes. We would wish, to be sure, that she had not thought proper to couple Eden and succeeding—glories and floorwise—burning and morning—thither and æther—enclose me and across me—misdoers and flowers—centre and winter—guerdon and pardon—conquer and anchor—desert and unmeasured—atoms and fathoms—opal and people—glory and doorway—trumpet and accompted—taming and overcame him—coming and woman—is and trees—off and sunproof—eagles and vigils—nature and satire—poems and interflowings—certes and virtues—pardon and burden—thereat and great—children and bewildering—mortal and turtle—moonshine and sunshine. It would have been better, we say, if such apologies for rhymes as these had been rejected. But deficiencies of *rhythm* are more serious. In some cases it is nearly impossible to determine what metre is intended. "The Cry of the Children" cannot be scanned: we *never saw* so poor a specimen of verse. In imitating the rhythm of "Locksley Hall," the poetess has preserved with accuracy (so far as mere syllables are concerned) the forcible line of seven trochees with a final cæsura. The

"double rhymes" have only the force of a single long syllable—a cæsura; but the natural rhythmical division, occurring at the close of the fourth trochee, should never be forced to occur, as Miss Barrett constantly forces it, in the middle of a word, or of an indivisible phrase. If it do so occur, we must sacrifice, in perusal, either the sense or the rhythm. If she will consider, too, that this line of seven trochees and a cæsura, is nothing more than two lines written in one—a line of four trochees, succeeded by one of three trochees and a cæsura—she will at once see how unwise she has been in composing her poem in quatrains of the long line with alternate rhymes, instead of immediate ones, as in the case of "Locksley Hall." The result is, that the ear, expecting the rhymes before they occur, does not appreciate them when they do. These points, however, will be best exemplified by transcribing one of the quatrains in its *natural* arrangement. That actually employed is addressed only to the eye.

> Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird
> In among its forest brothers
> Far too strong for it, then, drooping,
> Bowed her face upon her hands—
> And I spake out wildly, fiercely,
> Brutal truths of her and others!
> I, she planted in the desert,
> Swathed her 'wind-like, with my sands.

Here it will be seen that there is a paucity of rhyme, and that it is expected at closes where it does not occur. In fact, if we consider the eight lines as two independent quatrains, (which they are,) then we find them *entirely rhymeless*. Now so unhappy are these metrical defects—of so much importance do we take them to be, that we do not hesitate in declaring the general inferiority of the

poem to its prototype to be altogether chargeable to *them*. With equal rhythm "Lady Geraldine" had been far—very far the superior poem. Inefficient poetical expression; and expression, in poetry, —what is it?—what is it not? No one living can better answer these queries than Miss Barrett.

We conclude our comments upon her versification, by quoting (we will not say whence—from what one of her poems)—a few verses without the linear division as it appears in the book. There are many readers who would never suspect the passage to be intended for metre at all.—"Ay!—and sometimes, on the hillside, while we sat down on the gowans, with the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before, and the river running under, and, across it from the rowens a partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore—there, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own—read the pastoral parts of Spencer—or the subtle interflowings found in Petrarch's sonnets; —here's the book!—the leaf is folded down!"

With this extract we make an end of our fault-finding—and *now*, shall we speak, equally in detail, of the *beauties* of this book? Alas! here, indeed, do we feel the impotence of the pen. We have already said that the supreme excellence of the poetess whose works we review, is made up of the multitudinous sums of a world of lofty merits. It is the multiplicity—it is the *aggregation*—which excites our most profound enthusiasm, and enforces our most earnest respect. But unless we had space to extract three-fourths of the volumes, how could we convey this aggregation by specimens? We might quote, to be sure, an example of keen insight into our psychal nature, such as this:

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon;
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.
And I walked as if apart
From myself when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence.

Or we might copy an instance of the purest and most radiant imagination, such as this:

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my Fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than heard.
Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in—
Like a fountain falling round me
Which with silver waters thin,
Holds a little marble Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Or, again, we might extract a specimen of wild Dantesque vigor, such as this—in combination with a pathos never excelled:

Ay! be silent—let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each others' hands in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!

Or, still again, we might give a passage embodying the most elevated sentiment, most tersely and musically thus expressed:

And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high
and rare,
And true to truth, and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg
were—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-mind,
Which not by glory or degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing!

These passages, we say, and a hundred similar ones, exemplifying particular excellences, might be displayed, and we should still fail, as lamentably as the *skolastikos* with his brick, in conveying an idea of the vast *totality*. By no individual stars can we present the constellatory radiance of the book. *To the book* then, with implicit confidence we appeal.

That Miss Barrett has done more, in poetry, than any woman living or dead, will scarcely be questioned:—that she has surpassed all her poetical contemporaries of either sex (with a single exception,) is our deliberate opinion—not idly entertained, we think, nor founded on any visionary basis. It may not be uninteresting, therefore, in closing this examination of her claims, to determine in what manner she holds poetical relation with these contemporaries, or with her immediate predecessors, and especially with the great exception to which we have alluded,—if at all.

If ever mortal "wreaked his thoughts upon expression," it was Shelley. If ever poet sang (as a bird sings)—impulsively—earnestly—with utter abandonment—to himself solely—and for the mere joy of his own song—that poet was the author of the Sensitive Plant. Of Art—beyond that which is the inalienable instinct of Genius—he either had little or disdained all. He *really* disdained that Rule which is the emanation from Law, because his

own soul was law in itself. His rhapsodies are but the rough notes—the stenographic memoranda of poems—memoranda which, because they were all-sufficient for his own intelligence, he cared not to be at the trouble of transcribing in full for mankind. In his whole life he wrought not thoroughly out a single conception. For this reason it is that he is the most fatiguing of poets. Yet he wearies in having done too little, rather than too much; what seems in him the diffuseness of one idea, is the conglomerate concision of many;—and this concision it is which renders him obscure. With such a man, to imitate was out of the question; it would have answered no purpose—for he spoke to his own spirit alone, which would have comprehended no alien tongue;—he was, therefore, profoundly original. His quaintness arose from intuitive perception of that truth to which Lord Verulam alone has given distinct voice:—"There is no exquisite beauty which has not some strangeness in its proportion." But whether obscure, original, or quaint, he was at all times sincere. He had no *affectations*.

From the ruins of Shelley there sprang into existence, affronting the Heavens, a tottering and fantastic pagoda, in which the salient angles, tipped with mad jangling bells, were the idiosyncratic *faults* of the great original—faults which cannot be called such in view of his purposes, but which are monstrous when we regard his works as addressed to mankind. A "school" arose—if that absurd term must still be employed—a school—a system of rules—upon the basis of the Shelley who had none. Young men innumerable, dazzled with the glare and bewildered with the *bizarrerie* of the divine lightning that flickered through the clouds of the

Prometheus, had no trouble whatever in heaping up imitative vapors, but, for the lightning, were content, perforce, with its *spectrum*, in which the *bizarrerie* appeared without the fire. Nor were great and mature minds unimpressed by the contemplation of a greater and more mature; and thus gradually were interwoven into this school of all Lawlessness—of obscurity, quaintness, exaggeration —the misplaced didacticism of Wordsworth, and the even more preposterously anomalous metaphysicianism of Coleridge. Matters were now fast verging to their worst, and at length, in Tennyson, poetic inconsistency attained its extreme. But it was precisely this extreme (for the greatest error and the greatest truth are scarcely two points in a circle)—it was this extreme which, following the law of all extremes, wrought in him—in Tennyson —a natural and inevitable revulsion, leading him first to contemn and secondly to investigate his early manner, and, finally, to winnow from its magnificent elements the truest and purest of all poetical styles. But not even yet is the process complete; and for this reason in part, but chiefly on account of the mere fortuitousness of that mental and moral combination which shall unite in one person (if *ever* it shall) the Shelleyan *abandon*, the Tennysonian poetic sense, the most profound instinct of Art, and the sternest Will properly to blend and vigorously to control all;—chiefly, we say, because such combination of antagonisms must be purely fortuitous, has the world never yet seen the noblest of the poems of which it is *possible* that it may be put in possession.

And yet Miss Barrett has narrowly missed the fulfilment of these conditions. Her poetic inspiration is the highest—we can conceive nothing more

august. Her sense of Art is pure in itself, but has been contaminated by pedantic study of false models—a study which has the more easily led her astray, because she placed an undue value upon it as rare—as alien to her character of woman. The accident of having been long secluded by ill health from the world has affected, moreover, in her behalf, what an innate recklessness did for Shelley—has imparted to her, if not precisely that *abandon* to which I have referred, at least a something that stands well in its stead—a comparative independence of men and opinions with which she did not come personally in contact—a happy audacity of thought and expression never before known in one of her sex. It is, however, this same accident of ill health, perhaps, which has invalidated her original Will—diverted her from proper individuality of purpose—and seduced her into the sin of imitation. Thus, what she might have done, we cannot altogether determine. What she has actually accomplished is before us. With Tennyson's works beside her, and a keen appreciation of them in her soul—appreciation too keen to be discriminative;—with an imagination even more vigorous than his, although somewhat less ethereally delicate; with inferior art and more feeble volition; she has written poems such as he *could not write*, but such as he, under *her* conditions of ill health and seclusion, *would have written* during the epoch of his pupildom in that school which arose out of Shelley, and from which, over a disgustful gulf of utter incongruity and absurdity, lit only by miasmatic flashes, into the broad open meadows of Natural Art and Divine Genius, he—Tennyson—is at once the bridge and the transition.

R. H. HORNE*

MR. R. H. HORNE, the author of the "Orion," has, of late years, acquired a high and extensive *home* reputation, although, as yet, he is only partially known in America. He will be remembered, however, as the author of a very well-written Introduction to Black's Translation of Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature," and as a contributor with Wordsworth, Hunt, Miss Barrett, and others, to "Chaucer Modernized." He is the author, also, of "Cosmo de Medici," of "The Death of Marlowe," and, especially, of "Gregory the Seventh," a fine tragedy, prefaced with an "Essay on Tragic Influence." "Orion" was originally advertised to be sold for *a farthing;* and, at this price, three large editions were actually sold. The fourth edition (a specimen of which now lies before us) was issued at a shilling, and also *sold.* A fifth is promised at half a crown; this likewise, with even a sixth at a crown, may be disposed of—partly through the intrinsic merit of the work itself—but chiefly through the ingenious novelty of the original price.

We have been among the earliest readers of Mr. Horne—among the most earnest admirers of his high genius;—for a man of high, of the highest genius, he unquestionably is. With an eager wish to do justice to his "Gregory the Seventh," we have never yet found exactly that opportunity we desired.

* Orion: an Epic Poem in Three Books. By R. H. Horne. Fourth Edition. London: Published by J. Miller.

Meantime, we looked, with curiosity, for what the British critics would say of a work which, in the boldness of its conception, and in the fresh originality of its management, would necessarily fall beyond the *routine* of their customary verbiage. We saw nothing, however, that either could or should be understood—nothing, certainly, that was worth understanding. The tragedy itself was, unhappily, not devoid of the ruling cant of the day, and its critics (that cant incarnate) took their cue from some of its infected passages, and proceeded forthwith to rhapsody and æsthetics, by way of giving a common-sense public an intelligible idea of the book. By the "cant of the day" we mean the disgusting practice of putting on the airs of an owl, and endeavoring to look miraculously wise; —the affectation of second sight—of a species of ecstatic prescience—of an intensely bathetic penetration into all sorts of mysteries, psychological ones in especial;—an Orphic—an ostrich affectation, which buries its head in balderdash, and, seeing nothing itself, fancies, therefore, that its preposterous carcass is not a visible object of derision for the world at large.

Of "Orion" itself, we have, as yet, seen few notices in the British periodicals, and these few are merely repetitions of the old jargon. All that has been said for example, might be summed up in some such paragraph as this:

"'Orion' is the *earnest* outpouring of the oneness of the psychological MAN. It has the individuality of the true SINGLENESS. It is not to be regarded as a Poem, but as a WORK—as a multiple THEOGONY —as a manifestation of the WORKS and the DAYS. It is a pinion in the PROGRESS—a wheel in the MOVEMENT that moveth ever and goeth always—

a mirror of SELF-INSPECTION, held up by the SEER of the Age essential—of the Age *in esse*—for the SEERS of the Ages possible—*in posse*. We hail a brother in the work."

Of the mere opinions of the donkeys who bray thus—of their mere dogmas and doctrines, literary, æsthetical, or what not—we know little, and, upon our honor, we wish to know less. Occupied, Laputically, in their great work of a progress that never progresses, we take it for granted, also, that they care as little about ours. But whatever the opinions of these people may be—however portentous the "IDEA" which they have been so long threatening to "evolve"—we still think it clear that they take a very roundabout way of evolving it. The use of Language is in the promulgation of Thought. If a man—if an Orphicist—or a SEER—or whatever else he may choose to call himself, while the rest of the world calls him an ass—if this gentleman have an idea which he does not understand himself, the best thing he can do is to say nothing about it; for, of course, he can entertain no hope that what he, the SEER, cannot comprehend, should be comprehended by the mass of common humanity; but if he have an idea which is actually intelligible to himself, and if he sincerely wishes to render it intelligible to others, we then hold it as indisputable that he should employ those forms of speech which are the best adapted to further his object. He should speak to the people in that people's ordinary tongue. He should arrange words, such as are habitually employed for the several preliminary and introductory ideas to be conveyed—he should arrange them in collocations such as those in which we are accustomed to see those words arranged.

But to all this the Orphicist thus replies: "I am a SEER. My IDEA—the idea which by providence I am especially commissioned to evolve—is one so vast—so novel—that ordinary words, in ordinary collocations, will be insufficient for its comfortable evolution." Very true. We grant the vastness of the IDEA—it is manifested in the sucking of the thumb—but, then, if *ordinary* language be insufficient —ordinary language which men understand—*à fortiori* will be insufficient that inordinate language which no man has *ever* understood, and which any well-educated baboon would blush in being accused of understanding. The "SEER," therefore, has no resource but to oblige mankind by holding his tongue, and suffering his IDEA to remain quietly "unevolved," until some Mesmeric mode of intercommunication shall be invented, whereby the antipodal brains of the SEER and of the man of Common Sense shall be brought into the necessary *rapport*. Meantime we earnestly ask if *bread-and-butter* be the vast IDEA in question—if *bread-and-butter* be any portion of this vast IDEA; for we have often observed that when a SEER has to speak of even so usual a thing as bread-and-butter, he can never be induced to mention it outright. He will, if you choose, say anything and everything *but* bread-and-butter. He will consent to hint at buckwheat cake. He may even accommodate you so far as to insinuate oat-meal porridge—but, if bread-and-butter be really the matter intended, we never yet met the Orphicist who could get out the three individual words "bread-and-butter."

We have already said that "Gregory the Seventh" was unhappily infected with the customary cant of the day—the cant of the muddle-pates who dishonor a profound and ennobling philosophy

by styling themselves transcendentalists. In fact, there are few highly sensitive or imaginative intellects for which the vortex of *mysticism*, in any shape, has not an almost irresistible influence, on account of the shadowy confines which separate the Unknown from the Sublime. Mr. Horne, then is, in some measure, infected. The success of his previous works has led him to attempt, zealously, the production of a poem which should be worthy his high powers. We have no doubt that he revolved carefully in mind a variety of august conceptions, and from these thoughtfully selected what his judgment, rather than what his impulses, designated as the noblest and the best. In a word, he has weakly yielded his own poetic sentiment of the poetic—yielded it, in some degree, to the pertinacious opinion, and *talk*, of a certain junto by which he is surrounded—a junto of dreamers whose absolute intellect may, perhaps, compare with his own very much after the fashion of an ant-hill with the Andes. By this talk—by its continuity rather than by any other quality it possessed—he has been badgered into the attempt at commingling the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and of Truth. He has been so far blinded as to permit himself to imagine that a maudlin philosophy (granting it to be worth enforcing) could be enforced by poetic imagery, and illustrated by the jingling of rhythm; or, more unpardonably, he has been induced to believe that a poem, whose single object is the creation of Beauty —the novel collocation of old forms of the Beautiful and of the Sublime—could be advanced by the abstractions of a maudlin philosophy.

But the question is not even this. It is not whether it be not possible to introduce didacticism, with effect, into a poem, or possible to introduce

poetical images and measures, with effect, into a didactic essay. To do either the one or the other, would be merely to surmount a difficulty—would be simply a feat of literary sleight of hand. But the true question is, whether the author who shall attempt either feat, will not be laboring at a disadvantage—will not be guilty of a fruitless and wasteful expenditure of energy. In minor poetical efforts, we may not so imperatively demand an adherence to the true poetical thesis. We permit *trifling* to some extent, in a work which we consider a trifle at best. Although we agree, for example, with Coleridge, that poetry and *passion* are discordant, yet we are willing to permit Tennyson to bring, to the intense *passion* which prompted his "Locksley Hall," the aid of that terseness and pungency which are derivable from rhythm and from rhyme. The effect he produces, however, is a purely passionate, and not, unless in detached passages of this magnificent philippic, a properly poetic effect. His "Œnone," on the other hand, exalts the soul not into passion, but into a conception of pure *beauty*, which in its elevation—its calm and intense rapture—has in it a foreshadowing of the future and spiritual life, and as far transcends earthly passion as the holy radiance of the sun does the glimmering and feeble phosphorescence of the glow-worm. His "Morte D'Arthur" is in the same majestic vein. The "Sensitive Plant" of Shelly is in the same sublime spirit. Nor, if the passionate poems of Byron excite more intensely a greater number of readers than either the "Œnone" or the "Sensitive Plant"—does this indisputable fact prove anything more than that the majority of mankind are more susceptible of the impulses of passion than of the impressions of beauty. Readers

do exist, however, and always will exist, who, to hearts of maddening fervor, unite, in perfection, the sentiment of the beautiful—that divine sixth sense which is yet so faintly understood—that sense which phrenology has attempted to embody in its organ of *ideality*—that sense which is the basis of all Cousin's dreams—that sense which speaks of God through his purest, if not his *sole* attribute—which proves, and which alone proves his existence.

To readers such as these—and only to such as these—must be left the decision of what the true Poesy is. And these—with *no* hesitation—will decide that the origin of Poetry lies in a thirst for a wilder Beauty than Earth supplies—that Poetry itself is the imperfect effort to quench this immortal thirst by novel combinations of beautiful forms (collocations of forms) physical or spiritual, and that this thirst when even partially allayed—this sentiment when even feebly meeting response—produces emotion to which all other human emotions are vapid and insignificant.

We shall now be fully understood. If, with Coleridge, who, however erring at times, was precisely the mind fitted to decide a question such as this—if, with him, we reject *passion* from the true—from the pure poetry—if we reject even passion—if we discard as feeble, as unworthy the high spirituality of the theme, (which has its origin in a sense of the Godhead,) if we dismiss even the nearly divine emotion of human *love*—that emotion which, merely to name, causes the pen to tremble—with how much greater reason shall we dismiss all else? And yet there are men who would mingle with the august theme the merest questions of expediency—the cant topics of the day—the doggerel æsthetics of the time—who would trammel

the soul in its flight to an ideal Helusion, by the quirks and quibbles of chopped logic. There are men who do this—lately there are a set of men who make a practice of doing this—and who defend it on the score of the advancement of what they suppose to be *truth*. Truth is, in its own essence, sublime—but her loftiest sublimity, as derived from man's clouded and erratic reason, is valueless—is pulseless—is utterly ineffective when brought into comparison with the unerring *sense* of which we speak; yet grant this *truth* to be all which its seekers and worshippers pretend—they forget that it is not truth, *per se*, which is made their thesis, but an *argumentation*, often maudlin and pedantic, always shallow and unsatisfactory (as from the mere inadaptation of the vehicle it *must* be) by which this *truth*, in casual and indeterminate glimpses, is—*or is not*—rendered manifest.

We have said that, in minor poetical efforts, we may tolerate some deflection from the true poetical thesis; but when a man of the highest powers sets himself seriously to the task of constructing what shall be most worthy those powers, we expect that he shall so choose his theme as to render it certain that he labor not at disadvantage. We regret to see any trivial or partial imperfection of detail; but we grieve deeply when we detect any radical error of conception.

In setting about "Orion," Mr. Horne proposed to himself, (in accordance with the views of his junto) to "elaborate a morality"—he ostensibly proposed this to himself—for, in the depths of his heart, we *know* that he wished all juntos and all moralities in Erebus. In accordance with the notions of his *set*, however, he felt a species of shamefacedness in not making the enforcement

of some certain dogmas or doctrines (questionable or unquestionable) about PROGRESS, the obvious or apparent object of his poem. This shamefacedness is the cue to the concluding sentence of the Preface. "Meantime, the design of this poem of 'Orion' is far from being intended as a mere echo or reflection of the past, and is, in itself, and in other respects, a novel experiment upon the mind of a nation." Mr. Horne conceived, in fact, that to compose a poem merely for that poem's sake—and to acknowledge such to be his purpose—would be to subject himself to the charge of imbecility—of triviality—of deficiency in the true dignity and force; but, had he listened to the dictates of his own soul, he could not have failed to perceive, at once, that under the sun there exists no work more intrinsically noble, than this very poem *written solely for the poem's sake.*

But let us regard "Orion" as it is. It has an under and an upper current of meaning; in other words, it is an allegory. But the poet's sense of fitness (which, under no circumstances of mere conventional opinion, could be more than half subdued) has so far softened this allegory as to keep it, generally, well subject to the ostensible narrative. The purport of the moral conveyed is by no means clear—showing conclusively that the heart of the poet was not with it. It vacillates. At one time a certain set of opinions predominates—then another. We may generalize the subject, however, by calling it a homily against supineness or apathy in the cause of human PROGRESS, and in favor of energetic action for the good of the race. This is precisely *the* IDEA of the present school of canters. How feebly the case is made out in the poem—how insufficient has been all Mr. Horne's

poetical rhetoric in convincing even himself—may be gleaned from the unusual bombast, rigmarole, and mystification of the concluding paragraph, in which he has thought it necessary to say something *very* profound, by way of putting the sting to his epigram,—the point to his moral. The words put us much in mind of the "nonsense verses" of Du Bartas.

> And thus, in the end each soul may to itself,
> With truth before it as its polar guide,
> Become both Time and Nature, whose fixt paths
> Are spiral, and when lost will find new stars,
> And in the universal MOVEMENT join.

The upper current of the theme is based upon the various Greek fables about Orion. The author, in his brief preface, speaks about "writing from an old Greek fable"—but his story is, more properly, a very judicious selection and modification of a great variety of Greek and Roman fables concerning Orion and other personages with whom these fables bring Orion in collision. And here we have only to object that the really magnificent abilities of Mr. Horne might have been better employed in an entirely original conception. The story he tells is beautiful indeed,—and *nil tetigit*, certainly, *quod non ornavit*—but our memories—our classic recollections are continually at war with his claims to regard, and we too often find ourselves rather speculating upon what he might have done, than admiring what he has really accomplished.

The narrative, as our poet has arranged it runs nearly thus: Orion, hunting on foot amid the mountains of Chios, encounters Artemis (Diana) with her train. The goddess, at first indignant at the giant's intrusion upon her grounds, becomes,

in the second place, enamored. Her pure love spiritualizes the merely animal nature of Orion, but does not render him happy. He is filled with vague aspirations and desires. He buries himself in sensual pleasures. In the mad dreams of intoxication, he beholds a vision of Merope, the daughter of Œnopion, king of Chios. She is the type of physical beauty. She cries in his ear, "Depart from Artemis! She loves thee not—thou art too full of earth." Awaking, he seeks the love of Merope. It is returned. Œnopion, dreading the giant and his brethren, yet scorning his pretensions, temporizes. He consents to bestow upon Orion the hand of Merope, on condition of the island being cleared, within six days, of its savage beasts and serpents. Orion, seeking the aid of his brethren, accomplishes the task. Œnopion again hesitates. Enraged, the giants make war upon him, and carry off the princess. In a remote grove Orion lives, in bliss, with his earthly love. From this delirium of happiness, he is aroused by the vengeance of Œnopion, who causes him to be surprised while asleep, and deprived of sight. The princess, being retaken, immediately forgets and deserts her lover, who, in his wretchedness, seeks, at the suggestion of a shepherd, the aid of Eos (Aurora) who, also becoming enamored of him, restores his sight. The love of Eos, less earthly than that of Merope, less cold than that of Artemis, fully satisfies his soul. He is at length happy. But the jealousy of Artemis destroys him. She pierces him with her arrows while in the very act of gratefully renovating her temple at Delos. In despair, Eos flies to Artemis, reproves her, represents to her the baseness of her jealousy and revenge, softens her, and obtains her consent to unite with herself—with Eos—in a prayer to Zeus

(Jupiter) for the restoration of the giant to life. The prayer is heard. Orion is not only restored to life, but rendered immortal, and placed among the constellations, where he enjoys forever the pure affection of Eos, and becomes extinguished, each morning, in her rays.

In ancient mythology, the giants are meant to typify various energies of Nature. Pursuing, we suppose, this idea, Mr. Horne has made his own giants represent certain principles of human action or passion. Thus Orion himself is the Worker or Builder, and is the type of Action or Movement itself—but, in various portions of the poem, this allegorical character is left out of sight, and that of speculative philosophy takes its place; a mere consequence of the general uncertainty of purpose, which is the chief defect of the work. Sometimes we even find Orion a Destroyer in place of a Builder —as, for example, when he destroys the grove about the temple of Artemis, at Delos. Here he usurps the proper allegorical attribute of Rhexergon, (the second of the seven giants named,) who is the Break-down, typifying the Revolutionary Principle. Autarces, the third, represents the Mob, or, more strictly, Waywardness—Capricious Action. Harpax, the fourth, serves for Rapine—Briastor, the fifth, for Brute Force—Encolyon, the sixth, the "Chainer of the Wheel," for Conservatism—and Akinetos, the seventh, and most elaborated, for Apathy. He is termed "The Great Unmoved," and in his mouth is put all the "worldly wisdom," or selfishness, of the tale. The philosophy of Akinetos is, that no merely human exertion has any appreciable effect upon the *Movement;* and it is amusing to perceive how this great *Truth* (for most sincerely do we hold it to be such) speaks out from

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the real heart of the poet, through his Akinetos, in spite of all endeavor to overthrow it by the example of the brighter fate of Orion.

The death of Akinetos is a singularly forcible and poetic conception, and will serve to show how the giants are made to perish, generally, during the story, in agreement with their allegorical natures. The "Great Unmoved" quietly seats himself in a cave after the death of all his brethren, except Orion.

Thus Akinetos sat from day to day,
Absorbed in indolent sublimity,
Reviewing thoughts and knowledge o'er and o'er:
And now he spake, now sang unto himself,
Now sank to brooding silence. From above,
While passing, Time the rock touch'd, and it oozed
Petrific drops—gently at first and slow.
Reclining lonely in his fixed repose,
The Great Unmoved unconsciously became
Attached to that he pressed; and soon a part
Of the rock. *There clung th' excrescence, till strong hands,*
Descended from Orion, made large roads,
And built steep walls, squaring down rocks for use.

The italicized conclusion of this fine passage affords an instance, however, of a very blameable concision, too much affected throughout the poem.

In the deaths of Autarces, Harpax, and Encolyon, we recognise the same exceeding vigor of conception. These giants conspire against Orion, who seeks the aid of Artemis, who, in her turn, seeks the assistance of Phoibos (Phœbus.) The conspirators are in a cave, with Orion.

Now Phoibus thro' the cave
Sent a broad ray! and lo! the solar beam
Filled the great cave with radiance equable
And not a cranny held one speck of shade.
A moony halo round Orion came,
As of some pure protecting influence,

While with intense light glared the walls and roof,
The heat increasing. The three giants stood
With glazing eyes, fixed. Terribly the light
Beat on the dazzled stone, and the cave hummed
With reddening heat, till the red hair and beard
Of Harpax showed no difference from the rest,
Which once were iron-black. The sullen walls
Then smouldered down to steady oven heat,
Like that with care attain'd when bread has ceased
Its steaming and displays an angry tan.
The appalled faces of the giants showed
Full consciousness of their immediate doom.
And soon the cave a potter's furnace glow'd
Or kiln for largest bricks, and thus remained
The while Orion, in his halo clasped
By some invisible power, beheld the clay
Of these his early friends change. Life was gone.
Now sank the heat—the cave-walls lost their glare,
The red lights faded, and the halo pale
Around him, into chilly air expanded.
There stood the three great images, in hue
Of chalky white and red, like those strange shapes
In Egypt's ancient tombs; but presently
Each visage and each form with cracks and flaws
Was seamed, and the lost countenance brake up,
As, with brief toppling, forward prone they fell.

The deaths of Rhexergon and Biastor seem to discard (and this we regret not) the allegorical meaning altogether, but are related with even more exquisite richness and delicacy of imagination, than those of the other giants. Upon this occasion it is the *jealousy* of Artemis which destroys.

—But with the eve
Fatigue o'ercame the giants, and they slept.
Dense were the rolling clouds, starless the glooms;
But o'er a narrow rift, once drawn apart,
Showing a field remote of violet hue,
The high Moon floated, and her downward gleam
Shone on the upturned giant faces. Rigid
Each upper feature, loose the nether jaw;

Their arms cast wide with open palms; their chests
Heaving like some large engine. Near them lay
Their bloody clubs, with dust and hair begrimed,
Their spears and girdles, and the long-noosed thongs.
Artemis vanished; all again was dark.
With day's first streak Orion rose, and loudly
To his companions called. But still they slept.
Again he shouted; yet no limb they stirred,
Tho' scarcely seven strides distant. He approached,
And found the spot, so sweet with clover flower
When they had cast them down, was now arrayed
With many-headed poppies, like a crowd
Of dusky Ethiops in a magic cirque
Which had sprung up beneath them in the night,
And all entranced the air.

There are several minor defects in "Orion," and we may as well mention them here. We sometimes meet with an instance of bad taste in a revolting picture or image; for example, at page 59, of this edition:

Naught fearing, swift, brimful of raging life,
Stiffning they lay in pools of jellied gore.

Sometimes—indeed very often—we encounter an altogether purposeless oddness or foreignness of speech. For example, at page 78:

As in Dodona once, ere driven thence
By Zeus *for that* Rhexergon burnt some oaks.

Mr. Horne will find it impossible to assign a good reason for not here using "because."

Pure *vaguenesses* of speech abound. For example, page 89:

——one central heart wherein
Time beats twin pulses with Humanity.

Now and then sentences are rendered needlessly obscure through mere involution—as at page 103:

Star-rays that first played o'er my blinded orbs,
E'en as they glance above the lids of sleep,
Who else had never known surprise, nor hope,
Nor useful action.

Here the "who" has no grammatical antecedent, and would naturally be referred to sleep; whereas it is intended for "me," understood, or involved, in the pronoun "my"; as if the sentence were written thus—"rays that first played o'er the blinded orbs of me, who, &c." It is useless to dwell upon so pure an affectation.

The versification throughout is, generally, of a very remarkable excellence. At times, however, it is rough, to no purpose; as at page 44:

And ever tended to some central point
In some place—nought more could I understand.

And here, at page 81:

The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream
Swift rolling toward the cataract and drinks deeply.

The above is an unintentional and false Alexandrine—including a foot too much, and that a trochee in place of an iambus. But here, at page 106, we have the utterly unjustifiable anomaly of half a foot too little:

And Eos ever rises circling
The varied regions of mankind, &c.

All these are mere inadvertences, of course; for the general handling of the rhythm shows the profound metrical sense of the poet. He is, perhaps, somewhat too fond of "making the sound an echo to the sense." "Orion" embodies some of the most remarkable instances of this on record; but if smoothness—if the true rhythm of a verse be sacrificed, the sacrifice is an error. The effect is

only a beauty, we think, where *no* sacrifice is made in its behalf. It will be found possible to reconcile *all* the objects in view. Nothing can justify such lines as this, at page 69:

> As snake-songs midst stone hollows thus has taught me.

We might urge, as another minor objection, that all the giants are made to speak in the same manner —with the same phraseology. Their characters are broadly distinctive, while their words are identical in spirit. There is sufficient individuality of sentiment, but little, or none, of language.

We *must* object, too, to the personal and political allusions—to the Corn-Law question, for example —to Wellington's statue, &c. These things, *of course*, have no business in a poem.

We will conclude our fault-finding with the remark that, as a consequence of the one radical error of conception upon which we have commented at length, the reader's attention, throughout, is painfully *diverted*. He is always pausing, amid poetical beauties, in the expectation of detecting among them some philosophical, allegorical moral. Of course, he does not fully, because he cannot uniquely, appreciate the beauties. The absolute necessity of re-perusing the poem, in order thoroughly to comprehend it, is also, most surely, to be regretted, and arises, likewise, from the one radical sin.

But of the *beauties* of this most remarkable poem, what shall we say? And here we find it a difficult task to be calm. And yet we have never been accused of enthusiastic encomium. It is our deliberate opinion that, in all that regards the loftiest and holiest attributes of the true Poetry, "Orion" has *never* been excelled. Indeed, we feel strongly

inclined to say that it has never been *equalled*. Its imagination—that quality which is all in all—is of the most refined—the most elevating—the most august character. And here we deeply regret that the necessary limits of this review will prevent us from entering, at length, into specification. In reading the poem, we marked passage after passage for extract—but, in the end, we found that we had marked nearly every passage in the book. We can now do nothing more than select a few. This, from page 3, introduces Orion himself, and we quote it, not only as an instance of refined and picturesque imagination, but as evincing the high artistical skill with which a scholar in spirit can paint an elaborate picture by a few brief touches.

> The scene in front two sloping mountains' sides
> Displayed; in shadow one and one in light.
> The loftiest on its summit now sustained
> The sun-beams, raying like a mighty wheel
> Half seen, which left the forward surface dark
> In its full breadth of shade; the coming sun
> Hidden as yet behind; the other mount,
> Slanting transverse, swept with an eastward face,
> Catching, the golden light. Now while the peal
> Of the ascending chase told that the rout
> Still midway rent the thickets, suddenly
> Along the broad and sunny slope appeared
> *The shadow of a stag that fled across*
> *Followed by a giant's shadow with a spear.*

These shadows are those of the coming Orion and his game. But who can fail to appreciate the intense beauty of the heralding shadows? Nor is this all. This "Hunter of shadows, he himself a shade," is made symbolical, or suggestive, throughout the poem, of the speculative character of Orion; and occasionally, of his pursuit of visionary happiness. For example, at page 81, Orion,

possessed of Merope, dwells with her in a remote and dense grove of cedars. Instead of directly describing his attained happiness—his perfected bliss—the poet, with an exalted sense of Art, *for which we look utterly in vain in any other poem*, merely introduces the image of the tamed or subdued *shadow stag*, quietly browsing and drinking beneath the cedars.

> There, underneath the boughs, mark where the gleam
> Of sun-rise thro' the roofing's chasm is thrown
> Upon a grassy plot below, whereon
> The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream,
> Swift rolling toward the cataract, and drinks.
> Throughout the day unceasingly it drinks,
> While ever and anon the nightingale,
> Not waiting for the evening, swells his hymn—
> His one sustained and heaven-aspiring tone—
> And when the sun hath vanished utterly,
> Arm over arm the cedars spread their shade,
> With arching wrist and long extended hands,
> And grave-ward fingers lengthening in the moon,
> Above that shadowy stag whose antlers still
> Hung o'er the stream.

There is nothing more richly—more weirdly—more chastely—more sublimely imaginative—in the wide realm of poetical literature. It will be seen that we *have* enthusiasm—but we reserve it for pictures such as this:

At page 62, Orion, his brethren dead, is engaged alone in extirpating the beasts from Chios. In the passages we quote, observe, in the beginning, the singular *lucidness* of detail; the arrangement of the barriers, &c., by which the hunter accomplishes his purpose, is given in a dozen lines of verse, with far more perspicuity than ordinary writers could give it in as many pages of prose. In this species of narration Mr. Horne is approached only by Moore

in his "Alciphron." In the latter portions of our extract, observe the vivid picturesqueness of the description.

Four days remain. Fresh trees he felled and wove
More barriers and fences; inaccessible
To fiercest charge of droves, and to o'erleap
Impossible. These walls he so arranged
That to a common centre each should force
The flight of those pursued; and from that centre
Diverged three outlets. One, the wide expanse
Which from the rocks and inland forests led;
One was the clear-skyed windy gap above
A precipice; the third, a long ravine
Which through steep slopes, down to the seashore ran
Winding, and then direct into the sea.

Two days remain. Orion, in each hand
Waving a torch, his course at night began,
Through wildest haunts and lairs of savage beasts.
With long-drawn howl, before him trooped the wolves—
The panthers, terror-stricken, and the bears
With wonder and gruff rage; from desolate crags,
Leering hyenas, griffin, hippogrif,
Skulked, or sprang madly, as the tossing brands
Flashed through the midnight nooks and hollows cold,
Sudden as fire from flint; o'er crashing thickets,
With crouched head and curled fangs dashed the wild boar,
Gnashing forth on with reckless impulses,
While the clear-purposed fox crept closely down
Into the underwood, to let the storm,
Whate'er its cause, pass over. Through dark fens,
Marshes, green rushy swamps, and margins reedy,
Orion held his way—and rolling shapes
Of serpent and of dragon moved before him
With high-reared crests, swan-like yet terrible,
And often looking back with gem-like eyes.

All night Orion urged his rapid course
In the vex'd rear of the swift-droving din,
And when the dawn had peered, the monsters all
Were hemmed in barriers. These he now o'erheaped

With fuel through the day, and when again
Night darkened, and the sea a gulf-like voice
Sent forth, the barriers at all points he fired,
Mid prayers to Hephæstos and his Ocean-Sire.

Soon as the flames had eaten out a gap
In the great barrier fronting the ravine
That ran down to the sea, Orion grasped
Two blazing boughs; one high in air he raised,
The other, *with its roaring foliage trailed*
Behind him as he sped. Onward the droves
Of frantic creatures with one impulse rolled
Before this night-devouring thing of flames,
With multitudinous voice and downward sweep
Into the sea, which now first knew a tide,
And, ere they made one effort to regain
The shore, had caught them in its flowing arms,
And bore them past all hope. The living mass,
Dark heaving o'er the waves resistlessly,
At length, in distance, seemed a circle small,
Midst which one creature in the centre rose,
Conspicuous in the long, red quivering gleams
That from the dying brands streamed o'er the waves.
It was the oldest dragon of the fens,
Whose forky flag-wings and horn-crested head
O'er crags and marshes regal sway had held;
And now he rose up like an embodied curse,
From all the doomed, fast sinking—some just sunk—
Looked landward o'er the sea, and flapped his vans,
Until Poseidon drew them swirling down.

Poseidon (Neptune) is Orion's father, and lends him his aid. The first line italicized is an example of sound made echo to sense. The rest we have merely emphasized as peculiarly imaginative.

At page 9, Orion thus describes a palace built by him for Hephæstos (Vulcan.)

But, ere a shadow-hunter I became—
A dreamer of strange dreams by day and night—
For him I built a palace underground,
Of iron, black and rough as his own hands.

Deep in the groaning disemboweled earth,
The tower-broad pillars and huge stanchions,
And slant supporting wedges I set up,
Aided by the Cyclops who obeyed my voice,
Which through the metal fabric rang and pealed
In orders echoing far, like thunder-dreams.
With arches, galleries and domes all carved—
So that great figures started from the roof
And lofty coignes, or sat and downward gazed
On those who stood below and gazed above—
I filled it; in the centre framed a hall;
Central in that, a throne; *and for the light,*
Forged mighty hammers that should rise and fall
On slanted rocks of granite and of flint,
Worked by a torrent, for whose passage down
A chasm I hewed. And here the God could take,
Midst showery sparks and swathes of broad gold fire
His lone repose, lulled by the sounds he loved:
Or, casting back the hammer-heads till they choked
The water's course, enjoy, if so he wished,
Midnight tremendous, silence, and iron sleep.

The description of the Hell in "Paradise Lost" is *altogether inferior* in graphic effect, in originality, in expression, in the true imagination—to these magnificent—to these unparalleled passages. For this assertion there are tens of thousands who will condemn us as heretical; but there are a "chosen few" who will feel, in their inmost souls, the simple truth of the assertion. The former class would at least be silent, could they form even a remote conception of *that* contempt with which we hearken to their conventional jargon.

We have room for no further extracts of length; but we refer the reader who shall be so fortunate as to procure a copy of "Orion," to a passage at page 22, commencing

One day at noontide, when the chase was done.

It is descriptive of a group of lolling hounds, intermingled with sylvans, fawns, nymphs, and oceanides. We refer him also to page 25, where Orion, enamored of the naked beauty of Artemis, is repulsed and *frozen* by her dignity. These lines end thus:

> And ere the last collected shape he saw
> Of Artemis, dispersing fast amid
> Dense vapory clouds, the aching wintriness
> Had risen to his teeth, and fixed his eyes,
> Like glistening stones in the congealing air.

We refer, especially, too, to the description of *Love*, at page 29; to that of a Bacchanalian orgie, at page 34; to that of drought succeeded by rain, at page 70; and to that of the palace of Eos, at page 104.

Mr. Horne has a very peculiar and very delightful faculty of enforcing, or giving vitality to a picture, by some one vivid and intensely characteristic point or touch. He seizes the most salient feature of his theme, and makes this feature convey the whole. The combined *näiveté* and picturesqueness of some of the passages thus enforced, cannot be sufficiently admired. For example:

> The archers soon
> *With bow-arm forward thrust, on all sides twanged*
> Around, above, below.

Now, it is this thrusting forward of the bow-arm which is the idiosyncrasy of the action of a mass of archers. Again: Rhexergon and his friends endeavor to persuade Akinetos to be king. Observe the silent refusal of Akinetos—the peculiar *passiveness* of his action—if we may be permitted the paradox.

"Rise, therefore, Akinetos, thou art king."
So saying, in his hand he placed a spear.
As though against a wall 'twere sent aslant,
Flatly the long spear fell upon the ground.

Here again: Merope departs from Chios in a ship.

And, as it sped along, she closely pressed
The rich globes of her bosom on the side
O'er which she bent with those black eyes, and gazed
Into the sea *that fled beneath her face.*

The fleeing of the sea beneath the face of one who gazes into it from a ship's side, is the idiosyncrasy of the action—of the subject. It is that which chiefly impresses the gazer.

We conclude with some brief quotations at random, which we shall not pause to classify. Their merits need no demonstration. They *gleam* with the purest imagination. They abound in picturesqueness—force—happily chosen epithets, each in itself a picture. They are redolent of all for which a poet will value a poem.

—her silver sandals glanc'd i' the rays,
As doth a lizard playing on a hill,
And on the spot where she that instant stood
Naught but the bent and quivering grass was seen.

Above the Isle of Chios, night by night,
The clear moon lingered ever on her course
Covering the forest foliage, where it swept
In its unbroken breadth along the slopes,
With placid silver; edging leaf and trunk
Where gloom clung deep around; but chiefly sought
With melancholy splendor to illume
The dark-mouthed caverns where Orion lay,
Dreaming among his kinsmen.

The ocean realm below, and all its caves
And bristling vegetation, plant and flower,
And forests in their dense petrific shade
Where the tides moan for sleep that never come

A fawn, who on a quiet green knoll sat
Somewhat apart, sang a melodious ode,
Made rich by harmonies of hidden strings.
Autarces seized a satyr, with intent,
Despite his writhing freaks and furious face,
To dash him on a gong, but that amidst
The struggling mass Encolyon thrust a pine,
Heavy and black as Charon's ferrying pole,
O'er which they, *like a bursting billow*, fell. . . .

——then round the blaze,
Their shadows brandishing afar and athwart,
Over the level space and up the hills,
Six giants held portentous dance. . . . .

——his safe return
To corporal sense, by shaking off these nets
Of moonbeams from his soul. . . . .

——old memories
Slumberously hung above the purple line
Of distance, to the East, while odorously
Glistened the tear-drops of a new fall'n shower. . .

Sing on!
Sing on, great tempest! in the darkness sing!
Thy madness is a music that brings calm
Into my central soul; and from its waves,
That now with joy begin to heave and gush,
The burning image of all life's desire,
Like an absorbing, fire breathed, phantom god,
Rises and floats! here touching on the foam,
There hovering o'er it; *ascending swift*
Starward, then swooping down the hemisphere
Upon the lengthening javelins of the blast!. . . . .

Now a sound we heard,
Like to some well-known voice in prayer; and next
An iron clang *that* seemed to break great bonds
Beneath the earth, shook us to conscious life. . . . .

It is Oblivion! In his hand—though naught
Knows he of this—a dusky purple flower
Droops over its tall stem. Again! ah see!
He wanders into mist and now is lost!—
Within his brain what lovely realms of death
Are pictured, *and what knowledge through the doors*
Of his forgetfulness of all the earth
A path may gain?

But we are positively forced to conclude. It was our design to give "Orion" a careful and methodical analysis—thus to bring clearly forth its multitudinous beauties to the eye of the American public. Our limits have constrained us to treat it in an imperfect and cursory manner. We have had to content ourselves chiefly with assertion, where our original purpose was to demonstrate. We have left unsaid a hundred things which a well-grounded enthusiasm would have prompted us to say. One thing however, we must and will say, in conclusion. "Orion" will be admitted, by every man of genius, to be one of the noblest, if not the very noblest poetical work of the age. Its defects are trivial and conventional—its beauties intrinsic and *supreme*.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY*

MACAULAY has obtained a reputation which, although deservedly great, is yet in a remarkable measure undeserved. The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible and logical writer, full of thought, and abounding in original views, often sagacious and never otherwise than admirably expressed—appear to us precisely in the right. The many who look upon him as not only all this, but as a comprehensive and profound thinker, little prone to error, err essentially themselves. The source of the general mistake lies in a very singular consideration—yet in one upon which we do not remember ever to have heard a word of comment. We allude to a tendency in the public mind towards logic for logic's sake—a liability to confound the vehicle with the conveyed—an aptitude to be so dazzled by the luminousness with which an idea is set forth, as to mistake it for the luminousness of the idea itself. The error is one exactly analogous with that which leads the immature poet to think himself sublime wherever he is obscure, because obscurity is a source of the sublime—thus confounding obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. In the case of Macaulay—and we may say, *en passant*, of our own Channing—we assent to what he says, too often because we so very clearly understand what it is that he intends to say. Comprehending vividly the points and the sequence of his

* "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays." By T. Babington Macaulay. Carey & Hart: Philadelphia.

argument, we fancy that we are concurring in the argument itself. It is not every mind which is at once able to analyze the satisfaction it receives from such essays as we see here. If it were merely *beauty* of style for which they were distinguished —if they were remarkable only for rhetorical flourishes—we would not be apt to estimate these flourishes at more than their due value. We would not agree with the doctrines of the essayist on account of the elegance with which they were urged. On the contrary, we would be inclined to disbelief. But when all ornament save that of simplicity is disclaimed—when we are attacked by precision of language, by perfect accuracy of expression, by directness and singleness of thought, and above all by a logic the most rigorously close and consequential—is it hardly a matter for wonder that nine of us out of ten are content to rest in the gratification thus received as in the gratification of absolute truth.

Of the terseness and simple vigor of Macaulay's style it is unnecessary to point out instances. Every one will acknowledge his merits on this score. His exceeding *closeness* of logic, however, is more especially remarkable. With this he suffers nothing to interfere. Here, for example, is a sentence in which, to preserve entire the chain of his argument —*to leave no minute gap which the reader might have to fill up with thought*—he runs into most unusual tautology.

"The books and traditions of a sect may contain, mingled with propositions strictly theological, other propositions, purporting to rest on the same authority, which relate to physics. If new discoveries should throw discredit on the physical propositions, the theological propositions, unless they can be sepa-

rated from the physical propositions, will share in their discredit."

These things are very well in their way; but it is indeed questionable whether they do not appertain rather to the trickery of thought's vehicle, than to thought itself—rather to reason's shadow than to reason. Truth, for truth's sake, is seldom so enforced. It is scarcely too much to say that the style of the profound thinker is never closely logical. Here we might instance George Combe—than whom a more candid reasoner never, perhaps, wrote or spoke—than whom a more complete antipode to Babington Macaulay there certainly never existed. The former *reasons* to discover the true. The latter *argues* to convince the world, and, in arguing, not unfrequently suprises himself into conviction. What Combe appears to Macaulay it would be a difficult thing to say. What Macaulay is thought of by Combe we can understand very well. The man who looks at an argument in its details alone, will not fail to be misled by the one; while he who keeps steadily in view the *generality* of a thesis will always at least approximate the truth under guidance of the other.

Macaulay's tendency—and the tendency of mere logic in general—to concentrate force upon minutiæ, at the expense of a subject as a whole, is well instanced in an article (in the volume now before us) on Ranke's History of the Popes. This article is called a review—Possibly because it is anything else —as *lucus* is *lucus a non lucendo.* In fact it is nothing more than a beautifully written treatise on the main theme of Ranke himself; the whole matter of the treatise being deduced from the History. In the way of criticism there is nothing worth the name. The strength of the essayist is put forth to account

for the progress of Romanism by maintaining that divinity is not a progressive science. The enigmas, says he is in substance, which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages, while the Bible, where alone we are to seek revealed truth, has always been what it is.

The manner in which these two propositions are set forth, is a model for the logician and for the student of *belles lettres*—yet the error into which the essayist has rushed headlong, is egregious. He attempts to deceive his readers, or has deceived himself, by confounding the nature of that proof from which we reason of the concerns of earth, considered as man's habitation, and the nature of that evidence from which we reason of the same earth regarded as a unit of that vast whole, the universe. In the former case the *data* being palpable, the proof is direct: in the latter it is purely *analogical.* Were the indications we derive from science, of the nature and designs of Deity, and thence, by inference, of man's destiny —were these indications proof direct, no advance in science would strengthen them—for, as our author truly observes, "nothing could be added to the force of the argument which the mind finds in every beast, bird, or flower"—but as these indications are rigidly analogical, every step in human knowledge—every astronomical discovery, for instance—throws additional light upon the august subject, *by extending the range of analogy.* That we know no more today of the nature of Deity—of its purposes—and thus of man himself—than we did even a dozen years ago—is a proposition disgracefully absurd; and of this any astronomer could assure Mr. Macaulay. Indeed, to our own mind, the *only* irrefutable argument in support of the soul's immortality—or, rather the only conclusive proof of man's alternate

dissolution and re-juvenescence *ad infinitum*—is to be found in analogies deduced from the modern established theory of the nebular cosmogony.* Mr. Macaulay, in short, has forgotten that he frequently forgets, or neglects,—the very gist of his subject. He has forgotten that analogical evidence cannot, at all time, be discoursed of as if identical with proof direct. Throughout the whole of his treatise he has made no distinction whatever.

* This cosmogony *demonstrates* that all existing bodies in the universe are formed of a nebular matter, a rare ethereal medium, pervading space—shows the mode and laws of formation—and *proves* that all things are in a perpetual state of progress—that nothing in nature is *perfected*.

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